the American Scholar

SPRING 1989

PRICE $5.00

The Dead Sea Scrolls
NORMAN GOLB

Srinivasa Ramanujan
BRUCE C. BERNDT

The Country Lawyer Remembered
WILLIAM DOMNARSKI

Writing About American Politics
RICHARD BROOKHISER

The Emperor Wore Clothes
HAROLD COURLANDER

John Crowe Ransom
CLEANTH BROOKS

Remembering Renan
WALLACE FOWLIE

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The critical profession

By STANLEY CAVELL

IN QUEST OF THE ORDINARY

Lines of Skepticism and Romanticism

These recent lectures by one of the most influential and original philosophers of the twentieth century constitute a sustained argument for the philosophical basis of romanticism, particularly in its American rendering in the works of writers such as Emerson, Thoreau, and Poe.

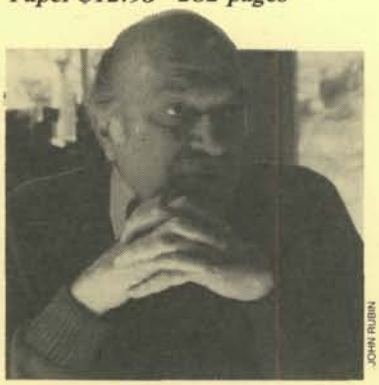
Cloth $19.95 208 pages

THEMES OUT OF SCHOOL

Effects and Causes

"*Themes out of School*, like Cavell's earlier books, cannot help but urge us to think, in fresh and undistracted ways, about the world that actually confronts us."—Jay Parini, *Hudson Review*

Paper $12.95 282 pages



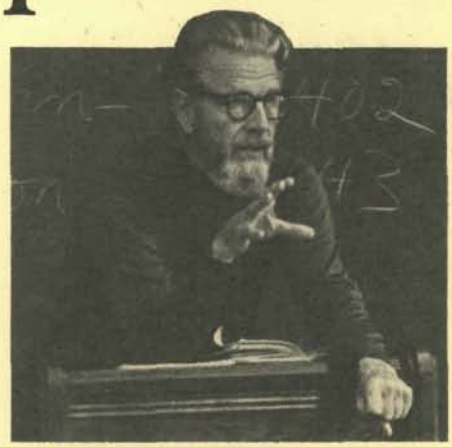
JOHN RUBIN

THIS NEW YET UNAPPROACHABLE AMERICA

Lectures after Emerson after Wittgenstein

These essays examine Wittgenstein as a critic of culture, who balanced a philosophy of the ordinary against the world's decline, and trace this philosophy back to Emerson.

Paper $9.95 108 pages
Library cloth edition $19.95
Distributed for Living Batch Books



THE VOCATION OF A TEACHER

Rhetorical Occasions, 1967–1988

WAYNE C. BOOTH

This new collection of articles, speeches, and journal entries by Wayne Booth is a passionate celebration of teaching as a vocation and an argument for rhetoric as the center of liberal education.

"This is one of the very few books that describe the teaching of college English as it is, in all its complexity, frustration, and rewards."—Lawrence Lipking, Northwestern University

Cloth $24.95 372 pages

Now in paper

PROFESSING LITERATURE

An Institutional History

GERALD GRAFF

"[A] fascinating account of the literary academy in the United States from the 1840s to the present day."—Chris Baldick, *Times Literary Supplement*

"Both [E. D.] Hirsch and [Allan] Bloom share . . . a nostalgia for a not very closely examined past in which things were better. Gerald Graff's *Professing Literature* is extremely important, partly because it tells us a good deal about the realities of this supposedly better time."—Robert Scholes, *College English*

Paper $11.95 323 pages

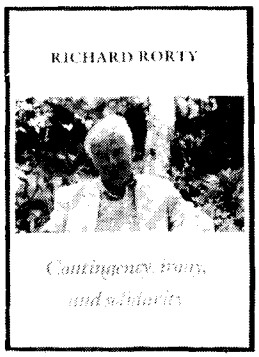
THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO PRESS *5801 South Ellis Avenue, Chicago, IL 60637*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity

Richard Rorty



Major American philosopher Richard Rorty argues that thinkers such as Nietzsche, Freud, and Wittgenstein have enabled societies to see themselves as historical contingencies rather than as expressions of ahistorical human nature. Using a wide range of references — from philosophy to social theory to literary criticism — Rorty shows how literature can advance Liberalism's social and political goals by providing a genuine sense of human solidarity.

$34.50 Hardcover
$10.95 Paper

A Treatise on Social Theory

Volume II: Substantive Social Theory

W.G. Runciman

Sets out a general account of the structure and evolution of human societies with evidence drawn from the whole range of societies documented in the historical and ethnographic record.

About $49.50 Hardcover About $15.95 Paper
Also available . . . Volume I: The Methodology of Social Theory $18.95

A Theory of Freedom

Stanley I. Benn

The central idea of this study is a radically unorthodox theory of rational action that analyzes the ways in which value conflicts can be rationally resolved, the objectivity of value, the concept of moral personality, the ideals of autonomy, and the rights to freedom, welfare, and privacy.

$49.50 Hardcover $17.95 Paper

The Theory and Practice of Autonomy

Gerald Dworkin

"Issues about autonomy are fundamental in ethics. Dworkin provides an excellent introduction to those issues, and I do not know of any book length discussion of a comparable sort."
– Gilbert Harman, Princeton University

Cambridge Studies in Philosophy $34.50 Hardcover $11.95 Paper

At bookstores or order from

Cambridge University Press

32 East 57th Street, New York, NY 10022. Cambridge toll-free numbers for orders only: 800-872-7423, outside NY State. 800-227-0247, NY State only. MasterCard and Visa accepted.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

PENN STATE PRESS

215 Wagner Building University Park, PA 16802 (814) 865-1327

Greatness in the White House: Rating the Presidents, Washington Through Carter

Robert K. Murray and Tim H. Blessing

A narrative account of the survey of almost 1,000 historians on what constitutes a successful performance in the presidency, this study examines why historians rate presidents the way they do, and tells us almost as much about the thinking and biases of historians as it does about the nature of the American presidency. *156 pp. paperbound $10.00*

Intervention and Underdevelopment: Greece During the Cold War

Jon V. Kofas

"This ground-breaking study . . . provides an insightful analysis of the American aid program that determined the political and economic configuration of postwar Greece. Kofas's analysis, however, is equally significant for United States history because it was on Greek soil that American counterinsurgency, pacification, and containment tactics were evolved, tested, and later applied elsewhere in the Third World . . . a thoughtful and thought-provoking study." *L. S. Stavrianos in the Foreword 230 pp. April 1989 $24.95*

Jewish Settler Violence: Deviance as Social Reaction

David Lee Weisburd

The 1967 victory brought the bulk of the biblical "Land of Israel" territories under Israeli control and rekindled traditional sentiments for Jewish sovereignty in *all* these territories. These sentiments became a powerful political force within Israel and provide a growing potential for violence. This book examines those Israelis who are most identified with this violence and provides an innovative and thought-provoking approach to violence that is rationalized and legitimized with reference to norms and values. It suggests that vigilantism and antigovernment violence will increase, at the same time the Israeli government will find it increasingly difficult to respond to and control settler deviance. *"Weisburd's empirical work reshapes the boundaries of several sociological domains — those of normative order, social control, deviance, and collective behavior." Albert J. Reiss, Jr.*
208 pp. July 1989 $22.50

Transported Styles in Shakespeare and Milton

Harold Toliver

Beginning with distinctions between rhetoric and poetry, Toliver examines the interplay of functional speech and poetry's sublime transport to hypothetical or second worlds. The dramatist who works toward a conservative reinstatement of social order is sometimes at odds with the poetic visionary. Juxtaposing Shakespeare and Milton on that matter helps situate them within their respective Elizabethan and Puritan outlooks. For both Milton and Shakespeare, the more transported the language, the less it can be applied to a normal social cohesion. In both, the dramatist and the bard find at best an uneasy truce.
288 pp. February 1989 $26.50

Text and Supertext in Ibsen's Drama

Brian Johnston

Johnston demonstrates how the language and scene, characters and "props," of Ibsen's dramas (in the Realist Cycle of twelve plays) establish a bold and far-ranging theatrical intention: nothing less than an account of our biological and cultural identity. He insists that Ibsen's realist text, while simulating the appearance of nineteenth-century life, also objectively and precisely builds up an alternative image in which archetypal figures and situations from our cultural past repossess the realist stage. *312 pp. January 1989 $28.50*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the American Scholar

Published for
General Circulation
by
PHI BETA KAPPA

EDITORIAL BOARD

G. W. BOWERSOCK
S. CHANDRASEKHAR
PETER GAY
JOHN GROSS
GERTRUDE HIMMELFARB
HILTON KRAMER
CHARLES KRAUTHAMMER
MARY LEFKOWITZ
BERNARD LEWIS
EDWARD LUTTWAK
ANGELICA RUDENSTINE
SIMON SCHAMA
EDWARD SHILS
CAROL HOUCK SMITH

JACOB STEIN

JOSEPH EPSTEIN, *Editor*
OTIS A. SINGLETARY, *Consulting Editor*
JEREMY BERNSTEIN, *Contributing Editor*
JEAN STIPICEVIC, *Managing Editor*
SANDRA COSTICH, *Associate Editor*
THOMAS NIEMAN, *Assistant Editor*
CARLEY STRAUGHAN, *Subscription Manager*
EDNA NWABUFO, *Subscription Assistant*

Advertising Representative: CREATIVE IMAGES, INC., 2108 Kingshouse Road, Silver Spring, Maryland 20904. Telephone: 301-384-2440. *U.S.A. Newsstand Distribution:* EASTERN NEWS DISTRIBUTORS, INC., 250 West 55th Street, New York, New York 10019.

THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR (ISSN 0003-0937), published quarterly since 1932 by the Phi Beta Kappa Society, 1811 Q Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20009. For subscription information call 202-265-3808. Second-class postage paid at Washington, D.C., and at additional mailing offices. Copyright © 1989 by the Phi Beta Kappa Society.

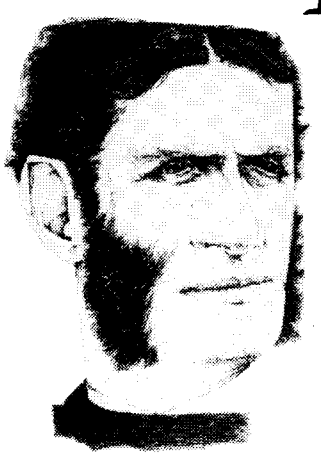
POSTMASTER: Send all change of address notices, undeliverable copies, subscription orders, and other mail to THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR, 1811 Q Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20009.

Subscription rates: $5.00 a copy, $18.00 one year, $32.00 two years, $42.00 three years, foreign and Canadian $3.00 a year additional for postage.

Unsolicited manuscripts must be accompanied by return postage. No responsibility is assumed for their loss or injury, or for the views expressed in articles published.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

NEW FROM MICHIGAN



MATTHEW ARNOLD
The Yale Manuscript
Edited and with Commentary by S. O. A. Ullmann

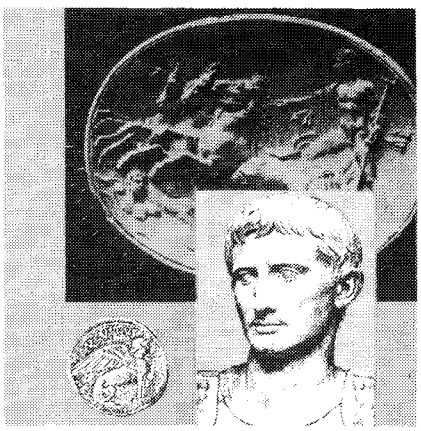
A collection of literary notes and poems written by Matthew Arnold between 1843 and 1857. Using handwriting analysis to date individual entries, S. O. A. Ullmann has made them easily accessible to scholars for the first time. Published to coincide with the centenary of Arnold's death, *The Yale Manuscript* will be indispensable as a primary source for Arnold scholars and students of Victorian literature and intellectual history. Supported with a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities.

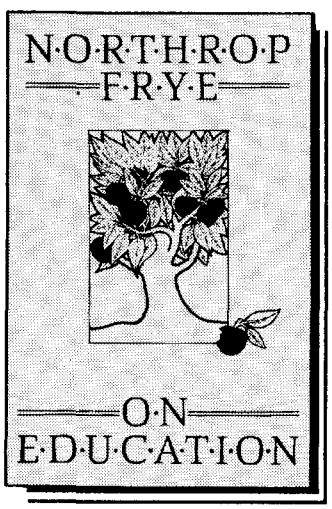
cloth $45.00

PAUL ZANKER
The Power of Images in the Age of Augustus

Rarely has art been pressed into the service of political power so directly as in the age of Augustus. The art and poetry of the period are filled with the imagery of a blessed world, an empire at peace under the sway of a great ruler. This new book examines works of art, buildings, clothing, and poetic imagery, along with the visual aspects of religious ritual, state ceremony, and the emperor's conduct and forms of social interaction. In doing so, the author shows how a new mythology of Rome and a new ritual of power were created through the use of visual imagery.

cloth $32.50





NORTHROP FRYE
On Education

On Education is a landmark collection of Frye's essays on educational theory. Spanning forty years, they are an absorbing portrait of continuity and change—in the theory and practice of education, and in the thinking of this great educator.

cloth $24.95

Michigan residents, include 4% sales tax.

THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN PRESS

Dept. HO P.O. Box 1104 Ann Arbor, Michigan 48106

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

CONTENTS

The Man in the Green Hat
Aristides 167

The Dead Sea Scrolls: A New Perspective
Norman Golb 177

John Crowe Ransom: As I Remember Him
Cleanth Brooks 211

Srinivasa Ramanujan
Bruce C. Berndt 234

Remembering Renan
Wallace Fowlie 245

Writing About American Politics
Richard Brookhiser 257

The Limitations of Liberalism
Elie Kedourie 265

The Emperor Wore Clothes:
Visiting Haile Selassie in 1943
Harold Courlander 271

The Country Lawyer Remembered
William Domnarski 283

POETRY

Poetry Workshop (First Semester)
John Frederick Nims 208

Whitman
Karl Shapiro 210

Small Birthday Poem
Mary Kinzie 270

Graduates
E. B. de Vito 282

Autobiographer
Peter Davison 288

BOOKS

Paul Kennedy's Rise and Fall
Edward N. Luttwak 289

Reviews
Peter Dailey, Burton Feldman,
Thomas Nieman, Eugen Weber 300

THE READER REPLIES 317

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

NEW PAPERBACKS

THE SOVIET UNION
The Incomplete Superpower
Paul Dibb

"A penetrating, thoughtful, and multifaceted view of Soviet strengths and weaknesses, meticulously researched and thoroughly documented." — *Political Science Quarterly.* $12.95

THE ENIGMA OF LOCH NESS
Making Sense of a Mystery
Henry H. Bauer

"A serious, carefully reasoned look at a controversial subject, one that should be read by all those interested in expanding the possible limits of human knowledge." — *Kirkus Reviews.* "Provides much useful information." — *The Atlantic.* $9.95

THE AMERICAN MYTH OF SUCCESS
From Horatio Alger to Norman Vincent Peale
Richard Weiss

An insight into the American Dream. Exploring both the secular and religious success literature, Weiss focuses on our society's beliefs that opportunity exists for all and that success can be obtained solely through one's own efforts. $9.95

THE NATURE OF POWER
Barry Barnes

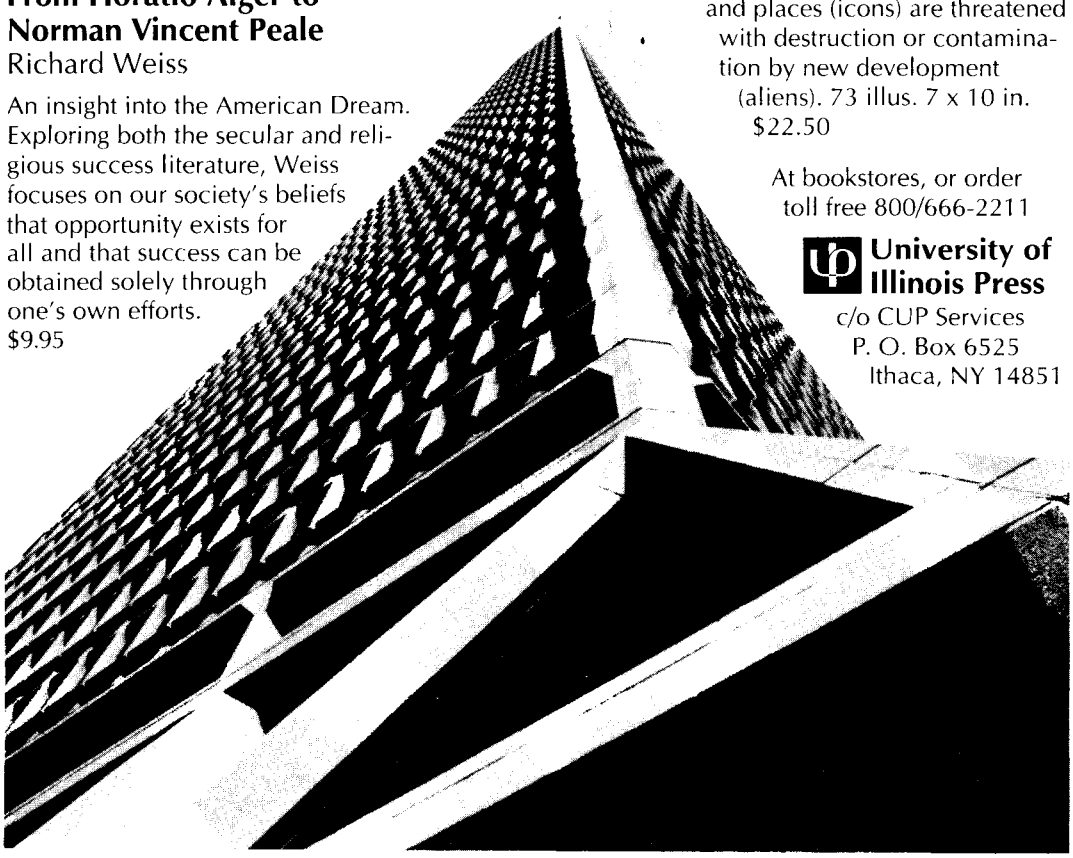
Arguing that power resides in the routines of social life and in the capacity for action represented by those routines, Barnes shows how those who are able to direct the routines of a society possess power within it. $29.95

ICONS AND ALIENS
Law, Aesthetics, and Environmental Change
John J. Costonis
With a foreword by Alan B. Jacobs

A compelling account of the psychological forces driving America's support for historical preservation, neighborhood conservation, and environmentalism. Costonis shows what happens when the bonds linking us to special buildings and places (icons) are threatened with destruction or contamination by new development (aliens). 73 illus. 7 x 10 in. $22.50

At bookstores, or order toll free 800/666-2211

University of Illinois Press
c/o CUP Services
P. O. Box 6525
Ithaca, NY 14851



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Man in the Green Hat

ARISTIDES

Unlike every other paragraph I have written in my life, this one I am writing while wearing a red fez. It is a serious fez, too, quality goods, purchased more than twenty years ago in Cairo and lent to me by its owner, a dear friend. I do not know whether I am wearing it correctly, but there it sits on top of my head, its black fringes dangling just above my right ear. In this fez I look like a man who has seen his share of the world's corruption and who is prepared to respond, strictly as a middleman you understand, to the most complicated murmurous suggestions. "A jeroboam of absinthe, a jade anklet, a male llama that understands Croatian, and a heavy-duty dry-cell battery?" I can hear myself saying. "Is not a problem, *effendi*. All four items will await you back in your room at the hotel within the hour."

I begin this paragraph in a green velour hat, a cross between a fedora and a trilby, its brim snapped down back and front. It is a handsome hat, in my opinion, but I am not in the least handsome in it. "Country Gentleman" is marked inside its crown. Wearing it, however, I look more like a city dog. Specifically, in this fine hat my face rather resembles the face of an oversized spaniel in a compromising position — apologetic, half-embarrassed, distinctly mournful. This is not quite the fashion statement I wish to make. Yet I do require a hat, especially in Chicago, where from December through March the city usually does a nice imitation of Moscow on Lake Michigan. I grow old, I grow old, the top of my size 7½ long oval head grows cold. It also begins to grow a bit silly looking in the caps I have taken to wearing in recent years as protection against the weather.

That I have gone through thirty-odd years of adult life in a cold climate without regularly wearing what I think of as an adult hat is a mildly interesting social fact. I have owned the green velour hat that gives me the fetching spaniel effect — in his memoirs, the musician Nicolas Slonimsky tells that, when still struggling with the English language, he once introduced Pablo Casals to an audience as a great cellist and "distinguished Spaniel" — I have owned this hat for better than fifteen years, and never once have I worn it out-of-doors. At one point, I gave it to my father, who shares my large head size. He did not look the least like a spaniel in it, but in time grew tired of the green hat, and I have since reclaimed it. I continued to admire the hat, so long as it didn't have my head in it. Then the other day I clapped it on while I happened to be wearing glasses—I also have grown a good crop of gray hair that now shows underneath the brim — and it looked rather better, or at any rate less ridiculous, on me. I may one day before too long wear the hat in public, I thought to myself, perhaps trying it out late at night in some quiet nearby suburb that doesn't have a leash law.

Mine is the first generation to give up wearing serious men's hats. Ours is the first generation for whom wearing a hat is no longer de rigueur, which, as the boys in the back room at *Webster's* will tell you, precisely means no longer "prescribed or required by fashion, etiquette, or custom: PROPER." Such hats as we wear tend to be slightly comic ones, parodistic versions of serious hats: little snap-brim jobs, or floppy Irish tweed numbers, or checkered lids of the kind to which the late Bear Bryant, football coach of Alabama, was partial. Early in the 1960s, men who worked for advertising agencies used to wear a short-brimmed hat known among themselves as the Madison Avenue crash helmet, but in no other line of work that I can recall did a serious hat seem, as they say in the Army, "standard issue." Today a man walking the streets of an American city in a homburg, with its curled brim and high crown, is likely to attract more attention for his oddity than another man dancing a boogaloo in a deep-sea diving suit.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Not long ago I found myself seated at a small lunch party next to a man who had only recently retired as president and principal owner of a successful manufacturing company. We appeared to have nothing in common yet got on quite well. I don't recall any of the subjects we talked about, but our conversation flowed nicely, each of us establishing with the other that he was a man of gravity, good humor, and superior perspective — establishing that we both were, in short, men of the world. When at the end of the lunch we rose from the table, my companion told me that he much enjoyed our talk and asked for my card so that he might call me to arrange another meeting. I had only to admit that I had no card to feel the breeze from my fall in his estimation. I wrote out my telephone number for him, but it wasn't the same. A man without a business card was not, in his view, somehow a substantial fellow. He never called. In retrospect, I am glad that he didn't see the hat I wore that day, a herringbone eight-section cap that, even though carried by all the Anglophiliac men's stores with names like The Shropshire Lad, was worn by workers fresh off the boat and newsboys in Horatio Alger novels.

This man was of my father's generation, the generation of men for whom hatlessness was roughly equivalent to shoelessness. For these men, to go out meant to go out in a hat. When I was growing up, I cannot recall my father being out-of-doors without his hat. The least errand—down to the drugstore at the corner for a newspaper, for example — required putting on his hat. To this day he seems, out-of-doors, a bit undressed when hatless, which in any case he rarely is, though he no longer wears felt hats made by such firms as Dobb's or Stetson but instead dons the jauntier, more relaxed chapeaux of the kind befitting a man now retired from the business wars ("seamed all over with the scars of the marketplace," as Henry James once characteristically put it).

Men of that generation early formed their style, their conception of how a man ought to look, and not only went with it, as we should nowadays say, but stuck with it throughout their lives. Edmund Wilson's getup for socializing at the Wellfleet beach at Cape Cod, ably described by Alfred Kazin ("the too elegant cane, the stains so carefully preserved on the Panama hat, the absurdly formal long white shirts sometimes flopping over the bulky stomach in Bermuda shorts") is a reminder that men of a certain era had a fixed manner of dress. "I have only one way of dressing," Wilson told Kazin, and he apparently never felt the need of another.

I myself have several ways of dressing. I am at this moment wearing a high and weighty fur hat, purchased for me in the Soviet Union for roughly seventy dollars. The hat stands some six inches high; it has earflaps that tie together across its top; its fur is luxuriantly dark. I am very fond of this hat, though I tend to wear it only three or four days a year — on those days in Chicago when it is so cold that running a Jiffy Lube franchise on the equator seems immensely attractive. I would wear my Russian hat more than I now do but for the inconvenient fact that when people see me in it they tend to laugh. As they pass me, adults smile, as if to say, "Look at that clown." Kids, especially little kids, point and giggle. I think the problem is that the hat makes me appear top-heavy, so that I seem a pair of galoshes walking under a fur hat. Handsome and splendidly warm though it is, perhaps this hat is not the best headgear for anyone who is not very tall, very Russian, or very unself-conscious.

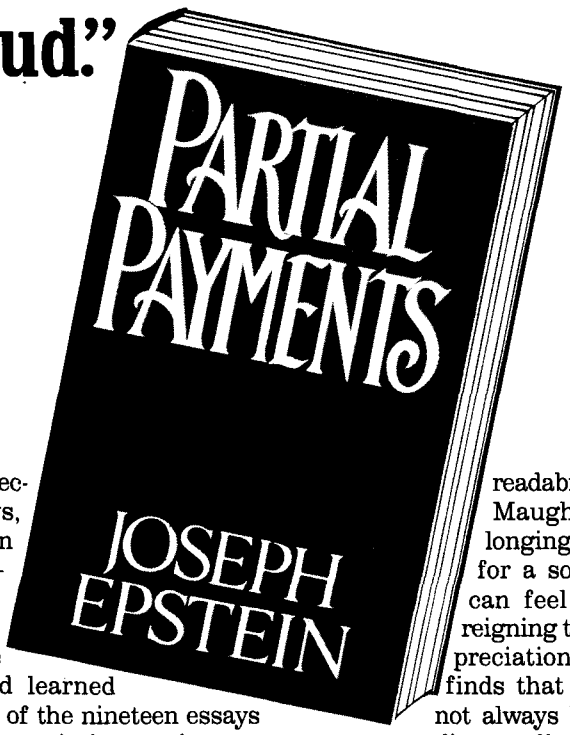
Hats have long been a stock prop for comedians. One thinks of Chaplin's and Laurel and Hardy's small bowlers, Keaton's pancake boater, the broken-down top hat of Harpo Marx worn at the back of his curly blond wig — props and trademarks all. Gangsters, according to the old movies, never went hatless; and I gather the fact that so many gangsters in the 1920s were photographed wearing costly hats, usually with extravagantly broad brims, drastically hurt the hat business. A cowboy without a hat is suitable only for bartending. A spy ought to wear a hat; so ought a detective, and an insurance man, and anyone whose job carries the title of commissioner. I would go a step further and say that all jobs that carry the title commissioner ought to come with a hat.

A number of other jobs should require a hat, and I mean a serious hat: a pinched-front, gray-felt, small-feather-in-a-black-band, I-kid-you-not, grown-up man's hat. As many jobs are nowadays referred to as "hard-hat" jobs, so ought there to be "serious-hat" jobs. A bank officer should wear a serious hat and so should a chief of police and all judges (circuit court on up). No man should be hired for a university presidency until he is seen in such a hat; and if he looks ridiculous in one, then perhaps search committees would do best to find another man for the job. Perhaps something of the grandeur of the United States would be

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Joseph Epstein is for me a 'special writer,' one whose prose style I admire without reservation and whose opinions I almost invariably applaud."

—Jonathan Yardley, *Washington Post*



In this new collection of essays, Joseph Epstein writes about authors to whom he feels indebted, those he has revered and learned from. The range of the nineteen essays in *Partial Payments* is impressive, extending historically from Matthew Arnold to Tom Wolfe; and intellectually from George Santayana to S.J. Perelman. Unifying this array of literary talent is Epstein's interest in what these writers have to tell us about life.

With him we discover the lovable common sense shared by Philip Larkin and Barbara Pym, the immense readability of Somerset Maugham, and the longing by V.S. Naipaul for a society where he can feel at home. The reigning tone is one of appreciation, but Epstein finds that rereading does not always bring the same response as first reading. S.J. Perelman does not seem as funny as he once did; and perhaps there is a darker side to E.B. White than his reputation would suggest.

"The modern essay has regained a good deal of its literary status in our time, much to the credit of Joseph Epstein."
—Karl Shapiro, *Chicago Tribune Book World*

Norton

Now at your bookstore. W.W. Norton & Company, 500 Fifth Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10110

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

restored if senators volunteered to wear serious hats. Let's face it, there have to be some adults around here someplace.

Heads of state once wore crowns, but today they ought at least to wear, as Mikhail Gorbachev, I note, did when he showed up in New York City, a gray-felt, two-inch-brim, suede-finish job. No American president has regularly worn a hat since Lyndon Johnson, and then he wore a Texas special (about six-and-a-half gallons, by my rough reckoning). John F. Kennedy wore a top hat to his inaugural and a serious hat on rare occasions; Richard M. Nixon sometimes wore a hat. Ronald Reagan wore no hat, except a cowboy number when riding on his ranch in California, and the mere idea of a hat on Jimmy Carter — who brought the first hot comb and blow dryer into the White House — is laughable. President Carter was too carefully coifed to wear a hat, and hats are hell on ambitious male hairdos.

Hat or hairdo, a man cannot have both, and thirty or so years ago, before the advent of male hairstyling, most men chose hats. A man's hat was, moreover, a thing to which he could easily become strongly attached. After all, it traveled with him day after day; it underwent the same heavy weather; it was part of his style and manner of addressing the world. If in time a man's hat came to look a little the worse for wear, so, probably, did he. Frank Sullivan, author of *The Night the Old Nostalgia Burned Down* and other works, in a piece entitled "A Man Never Drops a Hat," wrote about a twelve-year-old hat he was forced to relinquish: "I should never have deserted the faithful friend if there had been enough left of it to be true to." Sullivan recounts how hatcheck girls handled his hat "with disdain and tongs," while others made jokes about it. Still, he writes: "I grew to love that hat as only a man can love an old hat, and perhaps in its mute hatlike way it grew fond of me." Frank Sullivan was what is technically known as a humorist, but I am not altogether certain that he is kidding here.

Two ways to view an old hat: one is that it is beat-up and misshapen; the other is that it is nicely broken in. In the World War II movies of my childhood, the ace American fighter pilots — frequently played by Dana Andrews, Van Johnson, Robert Taylor, among others — always wore leather-billed service caps with what was known as "the fifty-mission crush," meaning that they had survived a great many dangerous missions and, like their owners, had been through a lot. These hats always had a comfortable, marvelously natural look, especially when their wearers pushed them slightly to the backs of their heads. My own somewhat similar hat, worn while serving in the peace-time army in the late 1950s, had a no-mission non-crush, and its rigid leather headband invariably left a welt-like red mark across my forehead. Wearing that hat, which I did as seldom as I could, I always felt uncomfortable and unnatural, as if I were missing something large and important. Missing, I came to conclude, was a bus, for in that hat I felt less like a soldier than a bus driver.

The late Arnaldo Momigliano, the distinguished historian of the ancient world, wore hats that had the civilian equivalent of the fifty-mission crush, except that in Arnaldo's case the hat looked as if he had been shot down over enemy territory on each mission and had managed his various escapes through a series of swamps, bogs, deserts, and avalanches. Arnaldo dressed with that disregard for the niceties of haberdashery permitted only to the world's greatest thinkers and scholars. (Recall Einstein, who always dressed to the nines, negative integer.) Arnaldo simply did not care about clothes, except for the warmth they gave, and this showed nowhere more than in his treatment of his hats. Small, dark gray, not inexpensive— they were in fact Borsalinos — after being in his possession for only a few months they looked, as befitted an ancient historian, as if they had been on winter campaign with Hannibal. Traveling with Arnaldo by plane, I have seen him stuff his hat into an already fully crammed overhead compartment as if it were a scarf, or perhaps an envelope, then slam the compartment door shut without giving it another thought. Those hats paid a heavy price for riding on top of so interesting a head.

Arnaldo Momigliano knew very well the comic condition of his own hats. He once gave me a brief account of shopping at a rather swank Borsalino store in Milan, at a time when it had become plain even to him that another of his gravely mutilated hats must be retired. The Borsalino salesman evidently knew, if not precisely who Arnaldo Momigliano was, that he was a man of great distinction, and his respect for men of distinction easily eclipsed any contempt he may have felt for the professor's unpressed, only approximately fitted clothes. Great care was devoted

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

to waiting on him, to making certain that this new hat — *il povero cappello,* what brutal treatment awaited it — was a proper fit. When the sale had been concluded, Arnaldo asked about his old hat. "Ah, *professore,*" said the salesman, with a slight bow, "not to worry. We have already taken care of it." Momigliano's wonderfully expressive eyebrows jumped slightly over his glasses, he smiled with his head bent slightly to the right, and the index finger on his right hand was extended to make an undotted exclamation point to close the unspoken sentence, "What exquisite tact!"

The earliest photograph I have of myself taken while wearing a hat shows a boy of three or four, in a tweed fingertip coat, clutching a bag of penny candy, standing on the balcony of an apartment in New York, ample cheeks puffed out by a forced-for-the-camera smile, sandy-colored bangs showing under a leather flyer's cap that buttons under the chin and has goggles attached. One can read much into this uncandid snapshot. Here is a little boy who has had much love. He will require vast quantities of attention later in life. He will not be easily pleased. Figures to have dental troubles. May just develop a thing about hats.

When I was a boy, it occurs to me now, I always had one or another kind of hat. I recall a not very impressive Indian headdress and, later, a more impressive Daniel Boone coonskin cap with a real raccoon tail. I had a number of brightly colored stocking caps, some that trailed down my back with a tassel at the end. There was a white Navy gob's cap and several dark blue watch caps. A thick wool red-and-black checked cap with earflaps I lost, maybe on purpose. Various baseball caps came my way, especially in grammar school days, and I broke in the bills of all of them, shaping them tent-like, as soon as I acquired them, in imitation of big-league ball players of the day. I remember in particular a red hat, an amalgam of a baseball and a hunting cap, that gave me pleasure every time I wore it. At ten years old, I thought I looked terrific in that hat; wearing it lifted my spirits, which were not low to begin with, and made me feel I was (in the phrase of the day) an astonishingly neat guy. Odd, is it not, how a piece of clothing — a hat, a shirt, a necktie, or a jacket — can induce one to take the most generous view of oneself and can bring one more sustained happiness than a good idea.

A hat that brought me no happiness at all was the maroon baseball cap I wore for nine or ten weeks during the sixth grade when I had a bout of — even now the word brings back the smells and sensation of shame — ringworm. A certain amount of it was then, as they say, "going around." Children of my generation were told not to put their heads on the backs of their seats at the movies, for this was supposed to be the main cause for the spread of the infection. I don't know if I caught mine at the movies or elsewhere, but one night I began scratching my scalp fiercely, and the next day my mother took me to the dermatologist with the most powerful reputation in Chicago. With large and confident hands, he held my head firmly under an ultraviolet light. "Yep," he said, unmoved, "he's got it."

The consequences following from that "Yep" were that I had to have my head shaved and that each night my mother washed my scalp in some special solution that smelled like every hospital corridor I have since walked, after which she spread a vile-smelling purplish salve over the infection. I had to wear a gruesome stocking cap made out of an old nylon stocking, over which I wore my maroon baseball cap. Having ringworm seemed like having what we kids used to call "cooties," but to the highest power. It seemed to me at the time a humiliation and a damnation and a bloody embarrassment. I brought a note to school that told of my infection and explained that I would have to wear my hat in class. No one, as I recall, teased me, no one made me feel any more leperish than I already felt. But one morning, walking along the halls between classes, our principal, a little man in an invariably gray suit whose name was Herman Ritow, snatched the hat off my head, exclaiming angrily, "Young gentlemen do not wear hats indoors." I stood there, my nylon-stocking cap over my shaved head, feeling exposed and utterly ashamed. Realizing that he had made a mistake, he apologized, but I felt unmasked as I never have since and hope never to be again.

To contradict the estimable Mr. Ritow, young gentlemen nowadays do wear hats indoors. Occasionally, a male student will show up in one of my classes wearing a hat, which puts it up to me to decide whether or not to call him on it. Often I do, though usually not directly, preferring the sly-dog to the head-on confrontational approach in such matters. "That hat, Mr. Swenson," I recall once asking a young man wearing in class the black and

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

orange cap of the San Francisco Giants, "are you wearing it for religious reasons?" When — shocking to report — he allowed that he wasn't, I gently signaled that he remove it, which he did without fuss. In a larger class, on another occasion, I noticed a student sitting toward the back of the room wearing a tight wool watch cap. He was a superior student, and so I decided to say nothing about his hat until after class, when, stopping him at the door, I asked, "Mr. Weiner, why are you wearing that hat?" "I was late this morning," he replied, "and didn't have time to shampoo." He then removed his hat, which released a small violence of curly, kinky, and spikey hair, a live and mobile bramble patch. "Mr. Weiner," said I, "please put your hat back on before you put out someone's eye."

But it is not the young alone who ignore the etiquette of wearing hats. On an airplane to New York, I not long ago sat a few rows behind a professor from the University of Chicago who kept his hat — a suede sports-car cap — on for nearly the entire flight. Men wear hats of all kinds in supermarkets and in department stores and on buses. A man who regularly tipped or even touched the brim of his hat when passing women or acquaintances would likely today be thought to have a tic. Baseball players still take off their hats when the national anthem is played, but I'm not sure many other men do. The seasonal rhythm of changing men's hats must by now be almost lost, so that a passage such as the following from Eudora Welty's *The Optimist's Daughter* will one day seem — if it does not seem so already—as obscure as an Aztec rite for killing poultry: "Back home, Judge McKelva had always set the example for Mount Salus in putting aside his winter hat on Straw Hat Day, and he stood here now in his creamy panama." What a charming detail! Here's mud in your eye, Judge, and none on that creamy panama.

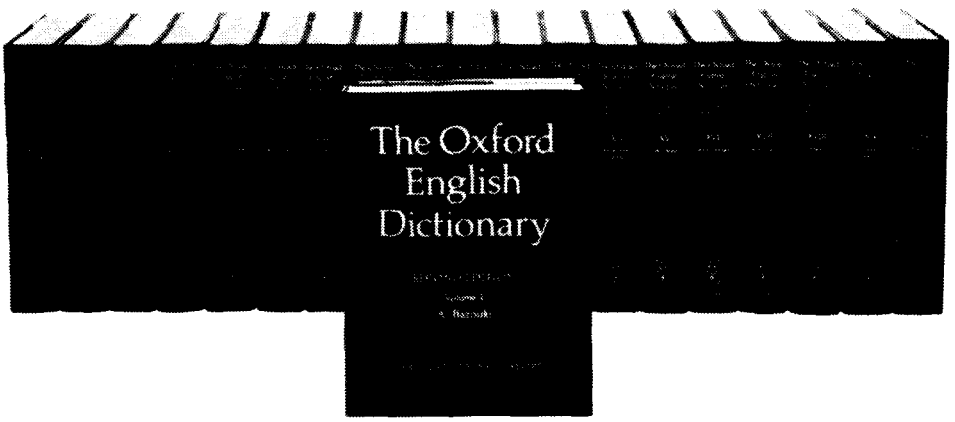
As the etiquette associated with wearing hats has all but disappeared, the institutions once in existence to deal with the care and maintenance of men's hats have disappeared completely. Establishments that cleaned and blocked men's hats, once ubiquitous on the cityscape, are now quite as difficult to find as new castanet or phylactery repair shops. Presumably, nowadays when a hat becomes dirty or begins to lose its shape, one pitches it out, even though it is not uncommon for a good man's hat to go for more than a hundred dollars. Leather hatboxes, of the kind I imagine Proust, the Duke of Windsor, and other serious wearers of serious hats must have had, are simply no longer available outside of antique shops. Hatcheck concessions in nightclubs and good restaurants, manned (make that womanned, you sexist dog) by hatcheck girls (always called girls no matter how old they were), are distinctly a thing of the past, with the consequence that the care of one's hat when on the town is pretty much one's own lookout. Even such a reliable old figure of speech as "If I'm wrong about that, I'll eat my hat" no longer has any grip, since the chances are great that the man who has said it isn't wearing a hat.

"If you're right about that," men used to say in the heat of argument, "I'll buy you a new hat." I don't say it, nor does anyone say it to me, but that doesn't stop me from buying myself a new hat whenever I come upon one that strikes me as amusing or that might make me as suavely dashing a figure as I secretly have always felt myself to be. I haven't thus far found the latter hat, but I have acquired a fair number of the former. I have owned a deerstalker's cap (à la Sherlock Holmes) in a material of bold checks; a wide-brimmed soft white hat fit for a deeply tanned Davis Cup official in the glory days of amateur tennis; a World War II tanker helmet (which I used to play football when I was in grammar school); a dark blue cap, with lots of what in the military used to be called scrambled eggs across its bill, of the kind worn by astronauts aboard battleships after they have completed successful celestial cruises; and authentic replicas of the caps — the most chastely elegant in all of baseball, in my view — of the Boston Red Sox and the St. Louis Cardinals. I no longer own any of these chapeaux. I have given some away to people who expressed admiration for them, misplaced others, allowed all somehow to get away from me.

A hat I still own, one that even as I write this sentence sits on my skull, is a rich blue baseball-style cap with the interlocking letters *N* and *D* in gold thread woven across its front, which stands for Notre Dame. It cost fourteen dollars and is a fine piece of goods but for one flaw: it has a small piece of plastic belting at the back that allows one to adjust it to fit different head sizes. It is, in other dreary words, what is known as "one size fits all." One-size-fits-all must be a boon to cap makers, who no longer have to worry about sizing hats

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Announcing the Second Edition of the world's most comprehensive and authoritative dictionary



"The *OED* has been to me a teacher, a companion, a source of endless discovery. I could not have become a writer without it. I welcome it in its new and comprehensive form, with its supplements absorbed into its main body, with its employment of a scientific phonetic notation that supersedes the brilliant but quirky system of James Murray, with its astonishing panorama of what English is and what it has been. There will be no greater publishing event this century than the appearance of the new OED."

—Anthony Burgess

For 60 years, the *Oxford English Dictionary* has been known as the ultimate authority on the English language, unchallenged in its accuracy and comprehensiveness. This March, a major event in the long and distinguished history of this indispensable dictionary will occur: the publication of the *OED*, Second Edition, which integrates the original dictionary of 1928 with the four supplementary volumes that were published between 1972 and 1986. In 20 volumes, completely re-typeset and including 5,000 additional words and meanings, the Second Edition renders the *OED* more valuable than ever before.

☐ Please send more information about the *OED*, 2nd Edition.

Name

Institution

Address

City/State/Zip

NOTE: The original 12-volume *OED* is also available in electronic form. If you want information on this compact-disc version, please check here. ☐

OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS
Attn: Laura Brown, 200 Madison Avenue, New York, NY 10016

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

to the eighth inch, but it does take the notion of individuality away from one's hat. Would Henry James have worn a one-size-fits-all hat? Would Oscar Wilde? Or either of the Brothers Goncourt? Seems doubtful. Among literary men, perhaps only Tolstoy, who late in life fancied a floppy peasant's hat, and Walt Whitman, who affected a high-crowned, broad-brimmed hat for the frontispiece of *Leaves of Grass*, would have gone for it. Whitman might even have written a poem, one of those democratic dithyrambs he specialized in, entitled "One Size Fits All":

> Send me your fat-, your large-, and your lumpy-headed,
> Your crania quite narrow, most pointy, and small.
> America, where the shape of a head need not be regretted,
> Great Democratic land where one size fits any and all.

Max Beerbohm once wrote rather a better poem about his old man-about-town top hat, which he abandoned when he left England to live permanently in Italy:

> Once I used to perch on Max Beerbohm's pate,
> But now he's become Italianate;
> So here in contempt and disregard
> I moulder for ever at Appletree Yard.

A photograph of the Italianate and quite aged Max Beerbohm hangs on my wall, and in it he, the dear old dandy, is sitting upon a wicker chair on the balcony of his villa at Rapallo. At the time this photograph was taken, he must have arrived at his eighties, which did not impair his fastidiousness. In the photograph he is nicely turned out in a cream-colored soft flannel suit with white waistcoat and dark tie and dark socks. But the crown on this jewel of a man is his hat, a straw boater worn at what I believe used to be called a rakish angle. It is a fine finishing touch. My guess is that Max would wear this hat when alone, standing on his balcony staring out at the limpid blue Mediterranean. Many a deliciously impish, interestingly charming thought must have floated beneath that old straw boater.

I was myself last seen in Italy in a hat altogether un-Italianate. It is a cotton khaki number, with a soft crown and a narrow red-and-blue headband and widish brim that I usually wear pulled down all the way round. I try to wear it with panache, but I am fairly sure it doesn't come off; the general effect is a bit suburban, not to say public golf course. I was last seen donning this hat in Florence, in the Piazza Signoria, near the Palazzo Vecchio, a plaid short-sleeve shirt on my back, copies of Christopher Hibbert's book on the Medicis and Montaigne's *Travel Journal* in my hand, cleverly disguised as a simple, rather ignorant American tourist.

Among Europeans, the English were traditionally a notably well-lidded people. The Victorians and Edwardians had splendid hats in rich assortment. Winston Churchill was a hat man, and his hats, worn either on state occasions or in leisure, never disappointed; on him they all seemed very Churchillian. Rex Harrison made popular the soft checkered hat he wore as Professor Henry Higgins in *My Fair Lady*. Before his disgrace, Jeremy Thorpe, then leader of the Liberal Party, brought back the low-crowned, narrow-brimmed hat known as the trilby (named after the chief character in George du Maurier's novel *Trilby*). Bowler hats, which every Englishman who worked in the City used to wear, are nowadays much less in evidence in London. I'm not sure that today there is a characteristic English hat. A pity, I feel, though I am not exactly sure why I feel that it is. Room here for a theory? When a nation loses its empire, I wonder, does it also lose its hats?

The male beret, like the *baguette*, may seem a staple of French life, but one doesn't think of Frenchmen as behatted. Charles de Gaulle is most readily recalled in his kepi, but recent French premiers — Giscard d'Estaing, Mitterrand — bald though they are, have sought their own versions of *la gloire* bareheaded. Camus, Malraux, Sartre, the most famous French literary men of the past half century, were almost always photographed, outdoors as well as in, hatless. André Gide was sometimes photographed in his library wearing over his starkly bald pate a largish skullcap — Sainte-Beuve, a century earlier, wore a plainer version of the same cap — of the kind favored by the Sephardic Jews of North Africa.

Which brings me to my good friends the Jews — "Some of my best Jews," a rabbi who during the 1960s lost many of his congregants to Quakerism is supposed to have exclaimed, "are Friends" — whose males, according to Orthodox tradition, are supposed to keep their heads covered in the sight of God. Oddly,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

apart from the small skullcap called the yarmulke, the Jews have not invented any particular headgear that I know about. True, the Hasidic Jews of Eastern Europe wore, or at least the wealthier among them did, an extravagantly fur-trimmed circular hat. But otherwise Jews have worn the hats of the countries in which they live. Among the ultra-orthodox, one comes upon small boys wearing black versions of what I have been calling serious men's hats, which adultifies them, and it always takes me slightly aback. Normally observant Jewish boys of college age, dressed in every other way quite as their contemporaries, will wear doily-sized yarmulkes held in place toward the back of their heads with bobby pins. Coming out of the Princeton Club in New York a few months ago, I saw such a young man walking in. "Ah," thought I, "F. Scott Teitelbaum."

Having established by these remarks what in our touchy times will pass as my bona fides as a Jewish anti-Semite, let me double down, as they say in Vegas, and see if I can't win some points for being a racist by asserting that, for some while now, black men have worn hats with more flair than anyone else in America. Sidney Poitier looks dashing in a conventional fedora, and Walt Frazier, the retired New York Knick, looks as good in a more dramatic lid. (The word *lid* for *hat* is, I am confident, a black coinage, which reminds me that, at a pro basketball game, I once heard one young black guy greet another, who was wearing a wide-brimmed, pearl white hat with one side turned down, by saying, "Hey, man, where'd ya get that sky?") I never saw the inevitably elegant Duke Ellington in a hat, but it must have been a fine spectacle; Count Basie I saw in one of those Greek fisherman's caps, which I thought unworthy of him. I believe that many black men, perhaps a proportionately greater number than white men, understand that clothes can be not only stylish but witty, and that a hat can be the wittiest item of all, a real topper.

Fred Astaire knew that hats could be amusing, and he wore them well, even while dancing. Astaire chiefly wore the hat known as the porkpie, a low-crowned, circular, flat-topped number; so, too, did Dick Powell. Frank Sinatra was a sometime porkpie, sometime traditional-fedora man. Spencer Tracy wore no-kiddin'-around pinched-front hats in his movies and looked, consequently, like someone you oughtn't to kid around with. Very tall, generally husky men — John Wayne comes to mind — tend to overwhelm a conventional hat, which is probably why Wayne looked best in various wide-brimmed variations of cowboy hats, from cavalry colonel to Indian scout. Gary Cooper, whom one was used to seeing in full ten-gallon cowboy hats, played the part of a lawyer in the movie version of *Ten North Frederick* and was absolutely convincing in a lawyerly gray black-banded, pinched-front hat; I at any rate would have paid his no doubt high bill for legal services. It may be that to look serious in a serious hat you have to be a fundamentally serious person, which is one of the things that worries me about my not being able to wear my own green hat.

Three other hats — one an orangey red, the other a pacific blue, both made of linen and with long bills, and the third a one-size-fits-only-me Chicago Cubs hat — complete my collection of hats. A modest collection it is, too, if collection it can be called at all, since those hats that I own have not been acquired in any systematic way but only because they struck my fancy at the time I first saw them. Truman Capote, I recall reading, was a fairly serious collector of hats and was himself often photographed in one or another mildly exotic piece of headgear. Is there, I wonder, a hat museum? If there is, I should be delighted to attend it, there to stroll among the hats of the famous and the great: Roman and Viking helmets, crowns and headdresses, tricorns and shakos, German World War I helmets and solar topees, hats jaunty and solemn, cocked, flocked, billed, beaked, peaked, and festooned with feathers, flowers, and (alliteration out of control here, can't stop now) other fine flotsam. My guess is that the most interesting private collection of hats must belong to the Pope, who, in my opinion, looks good in all of them. But then he, the Pope, would probably look great in my green velour hat.

Unlike the Pope, Chekhov, otherwise a handsome man, did not look very good in his hat, a black, somewhat high-crowned job that, worn with his standard black suits, gave off a slightly clerical, not to say Hasidic, effect. Kafka, with his large pointy ears and low hairline, looks more than a touch unnatural in the one photograph of him in a hat that I have seen: the hat is a too-small derby that makes him faintly resemble an organ-grinder's monkey. Somebody ought to write a story entitled

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Kafka's Hat." Bernard Malamud wrote one entitled "Rembrandt's Hat," which shows its author to have been a man who knew his headwear (" . . . Rubin had taken to wearing various odd hats from time to time, and this white one was the newest, resembling Nehru's Congress Party cap, but rounded, a cross between a cantor's hat and a bloated yarmulke; or perhaps like a French judge's in Rouault, or a working doctor's in a Daumier print"). Gogol, of course, wrote "The Overcoat"; a shame he didn't write "The Hat" to go with it. John O'Hara published a collection of stories entitled *The Hat on the Bed,* and one of his stories in another collection, *Assembly,* is about a man whose most salient characteristic, at the outset of the story, is that he wears a plastic rain cover for his hat. When in Flaubert's novel Bouvard and Pécuchet meet for the first time on the Boulevard Bourdon, they fall into conversation only because they discover that each has taken the precaution to write his own name into his hat. And what, in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland,* drove the Mad Hatter mad, exactly? Clearly, we have here a rich subject: hats in literature. Perhaps we ought to open the canon, as they nowadays say in university English departments, where they always have plenty of loose cannons around, and let in Hat Lit.

I have recently had lunches with two men who wore serious hats and had serious titles to go with them: one a gray-pinched-front-wearing federal judge, the other a mellow-copper-shading-into-brown-trilby-wearing former ambassador. Both lunches gave me much pleasure. But more to my oblique point is how correct these gents — one of whom is younger than I, the other older — seemed in their hats. Caps wouldn't have done for either of them, and to have gone bareheaded on the wintry days on which we met would have seemed foolhardy for men who had impressive responsibilities. How is it, I ask myself now, that they wore their hats while my green hat seems to wear me, leaving me standing there with the earlier-mentioned mien of an indisposed spaniel?

I think it is that, though my hair grows grayer and thinner, my eyes pouchier and dimmer, though I realize that I shall never sing at the Carlyle, live in Paris, or be adored for my divine physical grace, though I rely heavily on my age and experience in teaching the young and am pleased to have lived through an interesting half century of history, even though and despite and notwithstanding all of this, I, in some part of my decreasingly agile mind, continue to think myself, if not exactly a youth, then nevertheless a young fella. "There's nobody too old to be young," Saul Bellow wrote in *The Dean's December.* "That's the present outlook." I wish it weren't mine. One afternoon not long ago, the more I thought about it, the more disappointed in myself I became.

I strode to the closet, put on a raincoat and scarf, and clapped the green hat on my head. It was late afternoon, but still light, and I had a few errands to run. I looked at myself in the mirror before I left and the effect, despite my determination, was still pure spaniel. So be it. I walked into the downtown section of the town in which I live, attempting to appear nonchalant while keeping an eye peeled for anyone who might be giggling at me in my hat. I walked two blocks at a brisk pace, looking at reflections of myself in store windows whenever I passed them. The green hat still seemed strange sitting there atop my head. But no one, near as I could make out, was laughing or gazing upon me with a look that implied, "Catch the turkey in the green hat!"

A young woman asked me directions to the local YMCA, which in my green hat I gave and she took with a perfectly straight face. In the stores where I shopped, and in the library where I picked up a book, I removed my hat, but no one seemed to think it odd that I was carrying such a hat. True, I met no friends or acquaintances, who might have remarked witheringly on my new headgear, but I kept moving through that cold and drizzly middle-western afternoon, eager to return to my apartment without being jolted by odd or hilarious looks.

When I was back in the apartment, I left my hat on, with its now single-mission crush, to see if I looked any different in it. In the mirror I looked not like a spaniel but like a boxer — not a prizefighter, that is, but the breed of dog: my eyes under the hat were red-rimmed and a touch rheumy from the cold and I seemed to myself rather jowly. Well, a boxer is not yet an adult male of mature years but it does beat a spaniel, at least in my view. It's a start. I intend to make further outings in my hat. If you happen to see a smallish man in a green velour hat, stroke his back, scratch him behind the ears, give him a biscuit if you have one on you, but whatever you do, please don't laugh at him. He's only trying to act his age.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Dead Sea Scrolls

A New Perspective

NORMAN GOLB

I

THE CHANCE DISCOVERY OF SEVEN ANCIENT SCROLLS in 1947 within a cave near Wadi Qumran, not far from the northwestern shore of the Dead Sea, proved to be anything but a unique find. Instead additional revelations in the wilderness of Judaea followed. Besides sites that the late Roland de Vaux and Yigael Yadin unearthed and described so well, the discoveries included many more Hebrew manuscripts found in the Qumran caves between 1949 and 1956, texts of the second century A.D. uncovered in Wadi Muraba'at and near En-Gedi (1951–55, 1960–61), and still other manuscripts, of the same character as those found at Qumran, which were discovered between 1963 and 1965 at Masada, the site of the last stand of the Palestinian Jews against Roman forces in 70–73 A.D.

There are compelling reasons why scholars engaged in the process of discovery and obliged to formulate hypotheses—no matter what their fields of knowledge—should concern themselves with these finds and the body of interpretation that has grown up around them. During the past four decades, most authors undertaking the study of the Qumran scrolls have claimed that the discoveries made in 1949 and after, either wholly or at least in large part offer support for the first theory of their origin initially proposed in 1948 when only seven scrolls were known. This theory held that the Jewish sect of the Essenes wrote the scrolls. In the first century A.D. Josephus Flavius and Philo of Alexandria described this group, both writers placing their number at approximately four thousand souls spread throughout Palestine. On the basis of a statement of Pliny the Elder (23–79 A.D.), and after brief study of one of the seven original Qumran texts, the first Qumran scholars inferred that these Essenes had had their main home at the site known as Khirbet Qumran—

✪ NORMAN GOLB is the Ludwig Rosenberger Professor of Jewish History and Civilization at the University of Chicago. His most recent work is *Les Juifs de Rouen au Moyen Age: Portrait d'une Culture oubliée* (1985).

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

lying below the area of the caves on the eastern side of the Qumran escarpment—that members of the sect had written these scrolls, and that then, during the period of the war with Rome (67–73 A.D.), they had hidden them away in the cave in which the scrolls were found. When additional scrolls and fragments of hundreds of other manuscripts were found in this and nearby caves in ensuing years, the Qumran-Essene hypothesis was expanded and developed: the Essenes had composed and copied over the many non-biblical Qumran texts at a scriptorium said to be located within the Khirbet Qumran site; moreover, many or all of the biblical texts had also been copied there; and all of these texts together had been hidden away in the various caves near Qumran just before the Romans stormed the settlement.

This view, which the great preponderance of scholars currently holds along with that portion of the lay public aware of the discoveries, was encouraged on a popular level in America particularly by Edmund Wilson in *The Scrolls from the Dead Sea* (1955), based upon a series of articles that had appeared earlier in *The New Yorker*. Wilson was of course not a scholar of ancient Hebrew texts, but his enthusiasm for the discoveries, his fascination with scholars involved in them, and his own keen intelligence combined to generate great interest in the finds as well as widespread and solid support for the original theory created to explain them. In 1969 Wilson published an updated and expanded version of his book whose basic effect was to invest the original hypothesis with an even greater degree of authority. The widespread popularity of this interpretation, forty years after first being proposed in the infancy of Qumran research, has resulted in its treatment as accepted truth in a wide body of literature.

Yet despite its popularity, the original theory has by now come to be confounded by a mass of anomalies requiring the addition of a number of qualifications—the effect of which is to make the theory appear far less convincing today than in the past. The anomalies strongly suggest a new interpretation of the discoveries, one not only consonant with previously known historical events, but also requiring none of the special arguments the original theory now needs. What is in fact becoming clear is that the phenomenon of the scrolls' unearthing and subsequent scholarship during the past forty years must now be treated, however reluctantly, as a normal chapter in the history of discovery—a chapter similar to many in which, as Karl Popper, Thomas Kuhn, and, more recently, Hans Kohn have convincingly argued, so many initially asserted hypotheses, despite fervent and sometimes diehard endorsement, eventually begin to relinquish their cogency as new evidence comes to light. By merely following the discoveries one by one in chronological order, it becomes obvious why this is so. Without special pleading or forced

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

exegesis, all current evidence leads to the conclusion that the scrolls originated in Jerusalem and were taken to hiding places in the Judaean wilderness for safekeeping either before or during the Roman siege on Jerusalem of 70 A.D.

The first discoveries—seven parchment scrolls of varying lengths and contents—were made by bedouin of the Ta'amireh tribe during the spring of 1947 in the cave now known as Qumran Cave 1, located approximately one kilometer north of the Khirbet Qumran site and approximately two kilometers from the closest point on the Dead Sea shore. These scrolls included two texts of the biblical Book of Isaiah; a work of religious hymns, in a style similar to that of the biblical psalms, of which eighteen columns and various small fragments have been preserved; a short commentary on the Book of Habakkuk in which the anonymous commentator attempted to relate the words of this prophet to events of his own time and the impending future; an embellished retelling of the early stories of Genesis, particularly those relating to Noah and Abraham, which unlike the other scrolls is written in Aramaic rather than Hebrew and which has come to be known as the "Genesis Apocryphon"; an imaginative description of a war to take place in an apocalyptic era between the good and evil troops of mankind, known as the "War of the Sons of Light against the Sons of Darkness"; and a work of eleven surviving columns, some paragraphs of which describe a gigantic initiation ceremony to be undergone by individuals endowed with the power to choose and follow a life of virtue.

This last work is known as the "Manual of Discipline" because several columns of text following the description of the ceremony of initiation set out a procedure for gaining admission to the group, as well as a mode of behavior for all its full-fledged members. The members are described as eschewing personal wealth, leading a communal life of radical spiritual and physical purity in which ceremonial meals are taken together, and participating both in study sessions given over to expounding "secrets" of the Pentateuch and in meetings meant for discussing the group's laws and behavior.

Several months after the bedouin's discovery of these seven scrolls—that is, late in 1947 or very early in 1948—they were examined in Jerusalem by Eliezer Sukenik. In his first publication on these texts (*Megillot Genuzot*, 1948), he states that, while the question of their origin still required investigation, he had found one indication that encouraged him to offer a hypothesis. When examining the scrolls, then in the hands of the Assyrian Metropolitan in Jerusalem, "I found in one of them a kind of book of regulations for the conduct of members of a brotherhood or sect." He inclined to hypothesize that this cache of manuscripts belonged originally to the sect of the Essenes, "for, as is

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

known from different literary sources, the place of settlement of this sectarian group was on the western side of the Dead Sea, in the vicinity of En-Gedi." Sukenik was here referring to the "Manual of Discipline," and with his statement was born the idea that has become so notable in the history of modern scholarship, that this work and the other scrolls found by the bedouin in 1947 all came from a community of Essenes living near the western shore of the Dead Sea.

Other scholars in France, America, and elsewhere soon took up Sukenik's view, but all who wrote on the scrolls in those early days of discovery thought only of seven texts emanating from a small group of pious believers. That the ancient Essenes had had books, even secret writings, of their own was a reasonable supposition, supported by a specific statement of Josephus; and as a number of ideas akin to Essenism (for example, communal living, radical purity, sobriety of spirit) could be discerned in the "Manual of Discipline," there was little reason not to conclude that this was indeed an Essene work, emanating, along with biblical texts and a few other previously unknown writings, from the community spoken of by Pliny.

To locate the cave where the bedouin had discovered these texts, an expedition was mounted in late January of 1949, and after a few days it was found to the north of the Khirbet Qumran site, at the time not yet excavated. When in February and early March of the same year this cave, which later would bear the identifying number 1Q (that is, Qumran Cave 1), was explored and excavated, it was found to contain fragments—more than seventy in number—of many more ancient Hebrew manuscripts (but no other full-fledged scrolls). Finally published in 1955, these fragments included various remnants of biblical texts, such as parts of the Pentateuch, the books of Judges and Samuel, those of Isaiah and Ezekiel, the Psalms and Daniel; there were even a few fragments of Leviticus in the palaeo-Hebrew (that is, old Canaanite) script, attesting to the great age of these texts. Among the non-biblical texts were small fragments of commentaries on Michah, Zephaniah, and the Psalms, similar in general style to the one on Habakkuk found earlier.

Fragments of the Apocryphal writings were identified, including two from the Book of Jubilees and one from the Testament of Levi. Some of these fragments were from apocryphal and apocalyptic writings previously unknown, the modern editors in these cases occasionally supplying such titles as "Book of Noah," "Apocalypse of Lamech," "Sayings of Moses," and "Book of Mysteries." Other fragments were so small as to remain unidentified; but some were large enough to allow analysis, and the editors have identified six of these as fragments of religious hymns and liturgical texts. Among the most important of the discoveries made in this cave were additional fragments both of the "War" scroll and of the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Manual of Discipline." A few fragments of the latter were relatively small pieces containing benedictions, but there was one long fragment apparently from the "Manual" consisting of two almost complete columns of text, and it was of great importance. For it began with the words, "This is the rule for all the congregation of Israel in the end of days." Since these two columns may originally have been attached to the "Manual" near its current beginning, the new fragment hinted at the possibility that the "Manual" had been altogether an apocalyptical writing whose ceremonies and discipline were meant for all Israelites, not only Essenes, at a future Messianic time. Indeed, the "Messiah of Israel" is mentioned in the fragment; he is to be present at a feast, clearly in apocalyptical times, along with "the leaders of the thousands of Israelites, each according to his honor . . . in their encampments and according to their journeys." In the first column of the fragment the statement is made, with reference to the eschatological times spoken of in the text, that an Israelite is to be allowed to have sexual intercourse only at the age of twenty, after a ten-year period of study of unidentified books called the "Book of Hago" and the "Statutes of the Covenant."

These statements and others in the fragment seem to conflict with the specific Essene identification—particularly with Pliny's assertion in chapter five of his *Natural History* that the Essenes of the Dead Sea shore were celibate. But scholars in those early days of manuscript discovery, fired by zeal for further knowledge of what they thought was a long-lost and now recovered sectarian community that might have influenced early Christianity, instead proposed a more comprehensive view of Essenism: all the texts of Qumran Cave 1 belonged to this ancient group that had promulgated and possessed secret writings as well as other literary texts—more than might have been suspected—and the variety of ideas in the texts showed these Essenes in different stages of their sectarian development.

With the excavation of the first Qumran cave completed, archaeological exploration in the Judaean wilderness appeared to stop. The Ta'amireh bedouin, however, continued their clandestine digging, and eventually began to find more manuscript fragments in a few caves located in a gorge called Wadi Muraba'at, approximately eighteen kilometers south of Qumran. From October 1951 through January 1952, the fruits of their efforts—both papyrus and parchment texts—were brought in small lots from the site to Jerusalem, where they were purchased on behalf of the Rockefeller Museum. Further finds, primarily of coins and artifacts, were made by archaeologists who were led to the site in January 1952 and in that and the following month explored its four caves. The Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek manuscripts were for the most part not of the same period as those found at Qumran, but dated mainly

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

from the Second Jewish Revolt against Rome (132–135 A.D.); they included personal and administrative letters—that is, autograph texts—of the leaders of that revolt, including Simon ben Kosiba (Bar Kokhba) himself, and cast important new light on the conduct of the war, particularly in the area of the Judaean wilderness. These texts were hailed for the further testimony they offered of the hitherto unsuspected literary fecundity of the Judaean desert; but, as they had little to do with first-century Judaism and Essenes, they failed to arouse the same universal enthusiasm that the Qumran discoveries had. The bearing of the Muraba'at finds on the question of the actual physical nature of the Qumran texts was never publicly discussed, and the finds apparently gave no pause to investigators bent on seeking the lost history of the Essenes of the Dead Sea shore.

While the Ta'amireh were pursuing their hunt at Muraba'at, archaeologists in Jerusalem had decided to undertake the excavation of Khirbet Qumran. This site was long thought to have been a fortress of the Judaean wilderness; but after the discoveries in the first Qumran cave, it came to be considered the possible home of the sect described by Pliny. Soundings at Qumran began late in 1951, and the excavation of the site was then pursued in four seasons between 1953 and 1956.

The completed dig revealed a once highly developed site, with well-built stone constructions, interconnected reservoirs for the storage of a very large supply of water, workrooms, stables, and a pottery, remnants of a surrounding wall, and a fortified tower. The site had clearly been stormed by Roman soldiers after a prolonged battle shortly before or after 70 A.D.—a fact shown by numerous arrowheads, Roman as well as Jewish coins with dates, and the clear indications of undermining of the encircling walls and burning of the complex. Khirbet Qumran had obviously been of a military nature, defended by an armed force at the time it was stormed by the Romans. And yet Philo said that the Essenes were the most peaceful of men and bore no arms, while Josephus described them only as carrying defensive arms in the course of travel. Pliny, on the other hand, said nothing about his celibate Essenes of the Dead Sea shore forming an armed troop, but that they had "only the palm-trees for company." (Pliny's other statement, that the town of En-Gedi lay "below" the Essenes' habitation, did not localize them precisely.) Despite the archaeological revelations, those pursuing the dig and working on the manuscripts in Jerusalem raised no question at the time regarding the continued suitability of the Qumran-Essene hypothesis.

This entire period was characterized by startling new manuscript discoveries in further caves in the vicinity of the site. The bedouin, having ceded the search at Muraba'at to the archaeologists early in 1952,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

returned to the area of Qumran, and in February of that year found additional Hebrew manuscript fragments in a cave less than two hundred meters to the south of Qumran Cave 1. These texts included eighteen biblical fragments as well as some from the Book of Jubilees and other apocryphal writings. When these finds reached the Jordanian sector of Jerusalem, it dawned upon the archaeologists there that the Qumran area might contain many more manuscript-laden caves, and an expedition consisting of several archaeological teams was immediately organized and set to work in March 1952. That month they explored more than two hundred caves in the vicinity of Qumran and discovered pottery in more than a score of them. Then, on March 14, they entered the cave now known as Qumran 3 (3Q), and a search of it brought to light three biblical fragments and eleven fragments of previously unknown non-biblical Hebrew writings, including fragments of a commentary on Isaiah and pieces of several unknown apocryphal texts. Most surprising of all, two sections of a copper scroll were found in Cave 3. The scroll's contents when deciphered seemed to consist of descriptions of hidden artifacts and treasures with geographical indications of the places of hiding. Later on it became evident that the described items included manuscripts as well.

Not until 1956 was the Copper Scroll successfully opened (by the process of sawing it into eighteen vertical sections). While the discovery met with great interest around the world, those working on the Qumran finds in Jerusalem found it to be a disturbing and enigmatic text: for the view had already taken hold that the finds of Qumran were all related to the Essene sect, who had had their motherhouse at Khirbet Qumran, and yet the great treasures described in the Copper Scroll could hardly have belonged to a single, relatively small sect in ancient Judaism. In their report to the Académie des Inscriptions et Belles Lettres, read there on June 1, 1956, the parties in charge of the work at Qumran stated:

> It is difficult to understand why the Essenes of Qumran were so concerned with these stories of hidden treasures, and especially why they saw fit to engrave them on copper, which at that time was a costly metal. . . . At all events, this guide to hidden treasure is the most ancient document of its kind to have been found, and is of interest to the historian of folk-lore.

The late André Dupont-Sommer quotes Roland de Vaux as having also stated that the Copper Scroll was the "whimsical product of a deranged mind." (See the citation in A. Dupont-Sommer, *Les Ecrits esséniens découverts près de la mer Morte*, Paris: Payot, 1959, p. 397.) By thus casting doubt on the authenticity of what to all indications is a precious Hebrew text of the period of the First Revolt, researchers missed another

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

important opportunity to reconsider the Qumran-Essene hypothesis, which instead took on new dimensions as the discoveries proceeded.

The archaeological teams found no further manuscript caves in the area they were investigating, and so terminated the expedition (spring 1952). This, however, only gave the Ta'amireh bedouin opportunity to return to the vicinity of Qumran. They began to explore the marl caves lying just to the south of the settlement, and in the summer of the same year penetrated into what later became known as Qumran Cave 4. Here they made a sensational discovery: approximately one meter beneath the surface was a huge number of fragments from what had been several hundred Hebrew manuscripts. When word of this reached the Jordanian sector of Jerusalem, another expedition was mounted (September 1952), and the archaeologists were able to find fragments of at least one hundred additional manuscripts in the same cave.

The finds of Cave 4 were and remain the high-water mark of manuscript discovery in the Judaean wilderness. The fragments, in their thousands, were sorted and classified in Jerusalem, and then portions of the material were assigned to a team of scholars for eventual publication. Three volumes containing fragments of the Cave 4 manuscripts, in addition to various individual fragments published in journals, have so far seen the light, and from them, as well as from descriptions of still-unpublished material, it is possible to gain an impression of the striking variety of texts coming from this cave: commentaries and paraphrases on many books of the Bible, apocalyptic visions, liturgical works, apocryphal writings both known and previously unknown, wisdom texts (in the style of the Book of Proverbs), interpretations of Pentateuchal laws, messianic speculations, and even horoscopes and puzzles. There is, in brief, every type and genre of literature that one would have expected to be in the hands of the Palestinian Jews in the period before the First Revolt, and much more that was not expected.

Yet, even when the contents of Cave 4 became known, the theory of Essene origin did not seem to suffer. Instead, scholars used the new texts to show that Essenism had been a yet more comprehensive movement than had been supposed after the discovery of the first cave.

Archaeologists working at the 4Q site in September of 1952 soon found another manuscript cave, 5Q, close by; and still another one nearby, 6Q, which the bedouin had explored some time earlier and emptied of manuscript remains, was identified at approximately that time. In addition to a total of fifteen biblical fragments, the texts of these two caves included various new apocryphal and apocalyptic fragments as well as a few writings of sectarian character, notably fragments of the Damascus Covenant (discussed further in Part II of this essay).

Three years after these discoveries, in the spring of 1955, archaeol-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ogists discovered four more caves in the area of Qumran (7Q–10Q), but they contained only a small number of minuscule fragments (including a few in Greek). In February of 1956 the indefatigable Ta'amireh, however, located another manuscript cave near Cave 3, to the north of Khirbet Qumran. This cave, 11Q, held some of the most important treasures discovered at Qumran, including complete scrolls such as had been found in Qumran Cave 1. Among these finds were an ancient Aramaic translation of a large portion of the Book of Job; a scroll containing extracts from the Book of Psalms and other devotional literature, both from known and unknown sources; a copy of the Book of Leviticus in palaeo-Hebrew script; and other writings that have yet to be published.

It is possible that the Temple Scroll, the latest of the Qumran texts to be found and published, originally came from this cave, but its actual provenance continues to be cloaked in secrecy. Sixty-six columns in length, the longest of the scrolls so far discovered, it is a description of a future Temple in Jerusalem, whose anonymous author has the Lord render the imaginative descriptions in the first person. The work is the product of the fertile mind of an apocalypticist who attempted a complete description of ritual and group conduct in the days of the envisioned Temple. While this scroll as well was assigned to the Essenes, recent critical opinion has risen to challenge this view. (The salient emerging views have been discussed by Michael Wise of the University of Chicago in his dissertation, to be published next year, "The Temple Scroll: Its Composition, Date, Purpose and Provenance.")

With the discovery of Qumran Cave 11, the world of learning thought that the great period of discovery in the Judaean wilderness had come to an end. But this was not the final chapter of the story. In 1960 and 1961 Israeli archaeologists conducted a search of the caves in the wadis lying between Masada and En-Gedi, and in caves of the wadi known as Nahal Hever they discovered still more autograph documents of the period of Bar Kokhba along with other manuscripts, legal documents as well as literary texts, of the late first and early second century A.D. The discovery of these texts proved conclusively that the Jews had taken care to preserve their personal documents in antiquity, and that these were capable of survival in the Judaean wilderness—but once again no connection was made between this fact and the nature of the texts found at Qumran.

After this period of discovery in the Bar Kokhba caves, the Israeli archaeologists turned their attention to Masada, the great rock fortress in the desert first built in the days of Alexander Jannaeus, and then developed by Herod toward the end of the first century B.C. Here, in two seasons of digging (October to May 1964 and November 1964 to April

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

1965) the archaeologists uncovered the entire area of Masada, including the portion of it used by the *sicarii* and refugees from Jerusalem during the final years of resistance to the Romans (70–73 A.D.). In the ruins of the last resistance were found, besides many artifacts of the period, fragments of fourteen more scrolls, including biblical texts, part of Ecclesiasticus, a fragment of Jubilees, and, most remarkably, a portion of the so-called "Songs of the Sabbath Day," known also as the "Angelic Liturgy"—a work of a mystical nature of which overlapping portions had been found in Qumran Cave 4 more than a decade earlier. The handwritings contained in these scrolls were of the same character as those in the scrolls found at Qumran—but they had been found at Masada, quite far away from Qumran and a fortress never known to have been a place where Essenes lived. Yigael Yadin and his colleagues were in fact now looking at the decisive evidence pointing to the true home of the manuscript finds of the Judaean wilderness, but without fully comprehending what they had found.

II

When, earlier on, some of the Qumran fragments of the "Angelic Liturgy" were published, it was inferred that the work implied a special calendar dividing the year into twelve months of thirty days. Previously, writers had held that such a calendar was used by the Essenes claimed to be living at Qumran, and that it was peculiar to this sect. This explanation, however, would have been destroyed by the unobstructed recognition that the very same work was also found at Masada, many of whose defenders came from Jerusalem before and following the Roman capture of the city in 70 A.D. The discovery of Qumran-like fragments at Masada could by the same token obviously damage the Qumran-Essene hypothesis as a whole.

Thus, a special explanation was once again introduced: this particular scroll, and possibly others found at Masada, had a peculiar history—either it alone, or with others, was brought there by none other than Qumran Essenes, who, it was claimed, joined up with the defenders in the last few years of the revolt. When offering this explanation, its proponents refrained entirely from as much as mentioning Jerusalem.

Yet there is no evidence either in Josephus or elsewhere that Essenes in small or large number joined the Masada defenders; and for this reason Yigael Yadin, the eminent director of the expedition, offered the defense that Josephus had written that the commander of another sector during the revolt was a certain John the Essene. The question was asked whether other Essenes might not also have joined the revolt—and

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

answered affirmatively by reference to the fragment of the "Angelic Liturgy" found at Masada.

This explanation, however, while protecting the theory of special connection between the Qumran caves and nearby settlement, moved against the known fact of capture of Masada by Judaean *sicarii* and the augmentation of the force there by refugees from the siege of Jerusalem. Moreover, it had the effect of promoting the standard hypothesis to a pan-Qumran theory accounting for virtually all of the finds of first-century Hebrew manuscripts in Palestine: finds near Jericho first mentioned by Origen (see below pages 191–192) were said to be earlier discoveries of manuscripts that took place at Qumran, the fragments of eight hundred scrolls found at Qumran also, according to this theory, originated there, and now the "Angelic Liturgy" fragment and perhaps still other Masada texts were likewise claimed to come from Qumran. By this view the Hebrew literature of first-century Palestinian Jews other than Essenes had virtually disappeared, while that of the (claimed) Qumran Essenes was represented through the centuries by at least four discoveries that could not possibly have consisted, all together, of less than a thousand manuscripts.

To accept such proposals *seriatim* and conjointly clearly, on careful reflection, becomes difficult. And yet without them, the one cogent inference that may be drawn from the presence of first-century Hebrew manuscripts at Masada is that Jewish *sicarii* who inhabited that site possessed scrolls that they had brought there after taking the fortress in 66 A.D., while other Jews took scrolls with them (in addition to basic possessions) when they withdrew from Jerusalem to that site. In the Masada excavations, surviving remnants of these possessions were discovered, including even such texts as the "Angelic Liturgy" that, before the Masada discoveries, were *erroneously believed* to have had a unique connection with Qumran.

Without recourse to the special explanation of a bond between Masada and Essenes from Qumran, the discoveries at Masada thus forcefully imply the act of removal of manuscripts from Jerusalem during the revolt. They indicate that Hebrew literary texts were deemed precious enough to warrant rescue during periods of danger.

It is not difficult to perceive why this now obvious explanation for the discovery of Hebrew manuscripts in the Judaean wilderness was not arrived at when the finds were first uncovered. The potent force of the Qumran-Essene hypothesis derives from the order in which the discoveries were made. The seed of the original concept was planted in the very first few years of discovery immediately after some columns of the "Manual of Discipline" had been read, and was thereupon cultivated by eminent scholars; subsequent finds in the wilderness led to the theory

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

being nourished rather than abandoned, and it has by now transformed itself into a deeply rooted tree of many fruitful branches. Only by removing oneself to a plateau of judgment distant from the excitement and sweep of events that prevailed during the years of discovery, and by considering the totality of finds without respect to their accidental chronological sequence, can one fully appreciate the problems inhering in the traditional hypothesis or resolve them with an alternate explanation of the evidence.

The first grave difficulty has to do with identification of Khirbet Qumran as the main settlement of Essenes in Palestine. The identification was first made primarily on the basis of rules contained in but one of the seven original scrolls, the "Manual of Discipline." Laws of this scroll having an Essenic flavor were then connected with Pliny's statement that the solitary and celibate Essenes lived west of the Dead Sea with only the palm trees for company, and that lying below them was En-Gedi.

At first it seemed logical to infer that the Khirbet Qumran settlement, located near the caves, was just this site, and that Essenes living there had hastily hidden the "Manual of Discipline," along with other writings of theirs, before the arrival of Roman troops at the settlement. When Khirbet Qumran was excavated, however, various elements of a fortress-like complex were revealed, and the archaeologists working at the site determined that it had been stormed by Roman soldiers after a hard-fought battle that included the undermining of the walls and setting at least part of the site on fire. The resisters would thus have had to be members of an armed troop—precisely unlike the Essenes as they are described in the classical sources.

This fact did not deter the archaeologists from identifying the site as an Essene settlement. They instead proposed that the Essenes were really more militaristic than they had been portrayed; Josephus, after all, does describe that same John the Essene as having served in the war against Rome as a general in charge of one of the fronts. This lonely and exceptional statement was coupled with archaeological evidence obtained from an otherwise unidentified site to reject an essential feature of the classical description of the Essenes—namely, their peace-loving and non-military nature.

In retrospect, this process illustrates how texts can be bent to the needs of a rampant hypothesis. But at the time, the urge to find the traces of the long-lost Essenic sect, whose mystique and religious appeal have been enhanced by a tradition of learned and semi-learned writing stretching back to the nineteenth century and earlier, was what mattered most.

Thus, when—contrary to early expectations—graves of women as

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

well as men were found in the ancient cemetery lying to the east of the ruins of the settlement, the explanation was immediately offered that Josephus (*War,* II, paragraph 161) had described not only celibate Essenes but also one group that was not celibate. Could not the Qumran site have been that of such a group, or at all events a kind of complex community perhaps with celibate Essenes at its core and non-celibate Essenes living in surrounding areas? Such was the idea that leading Qumran scholars in France and America proposed as early as 1958 and as late as 1973. In championing this view, they did not deal with the fact that none of the Qumran texts whatsoever espoused strict celibacy—a problem whose burden increased dramatically as the number of texts discovered rose from a mere seven to more than eight hundred.

With no solid textual basis to support it, the idea of such a community or communities living all together—so much at variance with the statement of Pliny and so different from the theory first propounded—did cause a certain hesitation. Some writers began eschewing the term *Essene,* but, rather than rejecting the fundamental hypothesis, they maintained that the group inhabiting the site was nevertheless a sectarian one closely related to the Essenes. Others, who became aware of passages in Qumran texts not in harmony with the Essene identification, began favoring new terms, characteristically maintaining on the basis of ideas contained in certain of the scrolls, however, that the Qumran site could at all events continue to be called a settlement of sectarian Jews. This seemingly left intact the concept that the Qumran scrolls had been written by members of a single sect living close to, or even in, the caves where they had been found.

This new idea, however, created still another problem. For, if the inhabitants of Khirbet Qumran had been another sect in ancient Judaism actively engaged in the literary and contemplative life, and if Pliny was indeed a reliable source of information on the Dead Sea area, why then would he, in describing it, have mentioned only the celibate Essenes to the exclusion of all other such sectarian groups?

Another major difficulty in the traditional hypothesis derives from the fact that between 1949 and 1956 thousands of fragments from more than eight hundred additional Hebrew scrolls were found in caves above Khirbet Qumran. The "Manual of Discipline" and the six other original scrolls turned out to be but a few among these many texts—a few that had by accident been found at the beginning of the period of discovery. Many of the newly found manuscripts consisted of biblical writings, remnants of ancient Jewish literature already known in Greek translation in the apocrypha and pseudepigrapha of the Hebrew Bible, writings similar to these latter, and still other genres of old Hebrew literature not previously known. Only a small fraction of the totality of scrolls con-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tained laws or doctrines that might be termed notoriously heterodox, let alone Essenic—even when compared with texts of early rabbinic Judaism (such as the Mishnah and Tosefta), which post-dated the Qumran scrolls by as much as two to three centuries. A large number of the non-biblical texts are akin to—in fact sometimes identical with—well-known books of the apocryphal literature, which have never been demonstrated to have been written by members of a single group or sect within ancient pre-rabbinic Judaism. Among those Qumran scrolls whose doctrines may be considered heterodox in comparison with rabbinic Judaism of the second and third centuries A.D., two of the most important are the "Manual of Discipline" and the "Damascus Covenant," the latter describing the migration of a group of early believers to Damascus, in Syria. There are remarkable contradictions between ideas of the one scroll and the other, and these conflicts alone disturb the concept of a single homogeneous sect living in antiquity at the Qumran site.

Besides the explanation that different groups with conflicting doctrines may have been living side by side at Qumran, several proposals have been offered to explain this difficulty. For example, it has been claimed that the evidence that Essenes wrote the scrolls and were living at the Qumran site is otherwise so strong that it must now be taken for granted that it was they who were mainly responsible for the writing and copying of the Jewish apocalyptic literature. Another proposal often put forward is that a group such as the one reflected in the "Damascus Covenant" represented an offshoot of the Qumran sect or vice versa, the contradictory doctrines being the result of inner developments made over centuries. Still another explanation, which arose soon after it was realized that fragments of the "Damascus Covenant" were located at Qumran, is that the word *Damascus*, occurring in passages of the "Damascus Covenant" that describe the migration there of a party or sect, is not to be taken at its face value but is rather a veiled metaphor for Qumran itself. A more recent explanation, offered only after many years of investigation of the manuscripts, is addressed primarily to the question of the variety and mutual contradictions of the texts—namely, that while one may posit that it was the Essenes who were living at Qumran and writing books there, they may very well also have copied scrolls whose ideas they did not themselves accept, and may well have brought in such scrolls from outside their settlement. All these explanations assume that the "Manual of Discipline" was the fundamental doctrinal work of at least the main body of Jews living at Qumran.

On careful reflection, these proposals are nevertheless most difficult to accept. No one has yet cogently explained why ancient Hebrew writers should use the geographical term *Damascus*—which in ancient

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Hebrew and Greek literature never stands for any other place but Damascus—for the Khirbet Qumran site located in the Judaean wilderness. Yet once it is admitted that the "Damascus Covenant" and some of the other scrolls were written elsewhere than at Qumran, it becomes the obligation of proponents of this view to demonstrate that certain other scrolls were indeed composed there—and for this there is no internal evidence whatsoever within the texts themselves. If, moreover, sectarians having conflicting doctrines were indeed living next to one another, did they then share the same "scriptorium" from which the texts claimed to have originated at Qumran are said to have emanated? This cannot be seriously believed. Nor can the suggestion that the Essenes, said by both Josephus and Philo to have numbered no more than four thousand souls, were the very ones responsible for the outpouring of imaginative texts constituting the apocryphal and apocalyptic literature of the Palestinian Jews. This is too vast a literature, with too many contradictory outlooks and points of view, to allow the idea of its origin within any one circle of sectarians. The proposal that the ideas of the sect that migrated to Damascus either derived from or developed into those found in the "Manual of Discipline" is likewise extremely difficult to harmonize with the striking contradictions between these two texts. In the "Manual," for example, there is much emphasis on the defiling power of money, whereas in the "Covenant" the possession of wealth is not discouraged but on the contrary assumed to be appropriate. The "Covenant" places no emphasis on communal living, whereas this is ordained in the "Manual." The sects represented by these two writings are thus far more likely to have been entirely separate ones than offshoots of each other.

The troubling question that thus arises is this: Insofar as Pliny's description of Essenic celibacy is not echoed in the "Manual of Discipline" and not matched by archaeological discoveries at Khirbet Qumran, and since there are contradictory doctrines in other heterodox Qumran texts—which are themselves outweighed in number by texts that cannot be demonstrated by their contents to be heterodox or sectarian at all—why must the "Manual of Discipline," accidentally found among the first seven scrolls in 1947, still be assumed to have been the very doctrinal work whose ideas were espoused by the people living at the Qumran site?

A further major difficulty with the traditional hypothesis arises because in 1949—that is, almost immediately after emergence of the theory with its emphasis on centrality of the site in the propagation of Essenism—Otto Eissfeldt observed that, in a Syriac letter, the Nestorian Patriarch Timotheus I of Seleucia (Baghdad, circa 800 A.D.) makes reference to the contemporary discovery of Hebrew manuscripts in a cave "near Jericho." Timotheus states that he learned this fact from

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"trustworthy Jews" who had converted; they told him that the dog of a hunting Arab had entered a cave and not come out. "His master followed him and found a dwelling within the rocks, in which were many books. The hunter went to Jerusalem and informed the Jews. They came in throngs and found books of the Old Testament and others in Hebrew script. . . ." Among these finds were "more than two hundred psalms of David"—that is, others besides those found in the biblical Book of Psalms.

Almost at the same time, other writers pointed out that the prolific Church author Origen, in the middle of the third century A.D., had said that the Greek Bible translation used by him for the sixth column of the Hexapla had been "found together with other Hebrew and Greek books in a jar near Jericho" during the reign of Caracalla some fifty years earlier.

Thus two old sources, one of the third century and the other of the ninth, had called attention to the discovery of Hebrew manuscripts near Jericho, and at least the larger of these caches had been found in a cave. After these statements became known, Qumran scholars proposed that they implied there had been earlier discoveries *at Qumran itself.* Timotheus as well as Origen had only spoken imprecisely of the discoveries having taken place "near Jericho." In this explanation, the apparent underlying reason for the finding of hundreds of scrolls in the same area over a millennium later was that the Jews of Jerusalem who had come to the cave site had simply not discovered all the manuscripts hidden in various surrounding caves.

However, the news of the find had, according to Timotheus's informants, moved "throngs" to come to the site, and these were not hunting bedouin but believing Jews. The idea that they would have overlooked the possibility of finding other ancient and, to them, perhaps sacred Hebrew scrolls in the nearby caves is thus difficult to credit. Neither Origen nor Timotheus states that the finds had been made near the shore of the Dead Sea, which is much closer to Qumran than Jericho is—and Origen in particular, who lived for some years in Palestine and was intimately acquainted with its geography, knew this fact well. There are, on the other hand, caves much nearer to Jericho than those at Qumran. If one refrains from subjecting the words of these authors to a special exegesis, it now appears much more likely that over the past seventeen centuries Hebrew manuscripts were discovered not only in the single area of Qumran, but in at least three hiding places in the wider neighborhood of Jericho. This in turn adversely affects the claim of organic connection between the Qumran settlement and the manuscripts of the nearby caves, instead pointing to another cause for the hiding of manuscripts in the Judaean desert in antiquity.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Some of these problems with the theory must have been at least considered in passing as researchers investigated the manuscripts and the Qumran site during the first decade of discovery. To be sure, the hypothesis had an intrinsic attraction, and so it was natural for archaeologists working at Khirbet Qumran to seek corroborating evidence for the identification among the ruins they were uncovering. Being convinced that the manuscripts had actually been composed at Qumran, they sought to answer the inevitable question, Where might the texts of this Essene settlement have been produced? They discovered a room of thirteen-by-four meters that had supported a second story of the same dimensions, and in the debris of the lower room surviving from the destruction of the second story were the remains of three mud-brick tables covered with plaster and two inkwells. This no longer extant second story, they proposed, had been a scriptorium—that is, a writing-room of scribes such as is known to have been located in certain medieval abbeys—where the Qumran scrolls were written or copied. An officially sanctioned sign containing the word *Scriptorium* is today staked into the ground at the site.

But consider that some writers have shown that tables of this kind could have been used for copying scrolls only with great difficulty, and that ancient depictions of scribes do not show them sitting at such tables. No fragment of parchment or papyrus was found in the debris of that room, nor any tools of scribes, such as styluses or line-markers. Moreover, unlike medieval scriptoria, the room and debris are not situated among chambers or halls demonstrably showing signs of academic use. In a community whose characteristics included a military tower and siege-walls, such a chamber seems far more likely to have been a meeting room or office, insofar as it was located adjacent to, and extending southward from, the tower. The idea of a scriptorium is hardly warranted either by the finds that were made in that room or by its position.

Archaeologists did, however, find jars at the settlement of the same kind as those in which scrolls had been stored in the caves—a discovery that seemed to offer strong support for the Qumran-Essene hypothesis, regardless of its weak aspects. And yet other discoveries were taking place that, if examined retrospectively in the light of the Masada finds, would appear permanently to disqualify that hypothesis as a satisfactory explanation of the phenomenon that, step by step, has now been brought to light.

The first of the new discoveries had in fact been initiated in 1951, with the finding of second-century Bar Kokhba documents at Wadi Murabba'at. These texts, as those found ten years later in the wadis inland from En-Gedi, are original, documentary autographs rather than

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

scribal copies of literary texts. The difference in the historical quality of the Bar Kokhba manuscripts and that of the texts from Qumran is demonstrated by the references in the former to genuine localities in the Judaean wilderness (for example, Beth Mashko, En-Gedi, Herodes [that is, Herodion], Jerusalem, Masada, Meṣad Ḥasidīn [Fortress of the Ḥasidim], 'Ir Naḥash, Qiryath 'Arabaya, Maḥoza and Petra), whereas the Qumran literary scrolls contain statements only about a few well-known cities (i.e., Jerusalem and Damascus), never about Qumran or even Jericho or En-Gedi.

Thus, the Bar Kokhba documents made clear—or should have made clear—that original Hebrew autographs of a documentary character, such as personal and administrative letters or deeds and contracts, could indeed survive from antiquity in the Judaean wilderness. In this way they put a potential spotlight on the fact that no substantive parchment or papyrus text of avowedly documentary character had been found at Qumran. This constitutes a grave embarrassment for the Qumran-Essene hypothesis: if the scrolls were from Qumran and if, when it was heard that Roman troops were approaching, these scrolls were gathered up in haste from chambers of the site and from its scriptorium—where one may assume that official letters and other documents of the sect were also produced—how could such documents have been so carefully excluded from the hiding process? One cannot think it likely that those leading a laura or motherhouse of the Essenes, as Khirbet Qumran has been called, would have left the deeds and records of the sect to perish in the ruins while taking care to hide away hundreds of literary writings. The "Manual of Discipline," for example, speaks of the importance of recording in writing the spiritual rank and position of each member of the order described in that text, but no such list has ever been found among the Qumran scrolls.

In addition, if one assumes that for a period of between one and two hundred years the Qumran site was indeed the main settlement of Palestinian Essenes and that they had an organic connection with the cave manuscripts, it is also highly remarkable that no documents of a personal nature should have been found there. Did not the individual Essenes write letters to one another, and would they not have wanted to preserve them to the same extent that the Jews of the Bar-Kokhba period hoped to? And how can it be that during four decades of investigation scholars adhering to the traditional hypothesis have not pointed out this difficulty?

Moreover, among the several intact parchment scrolls and more than eight hundred fragmentary texts believed to have originated at the Khirbet Qumran settlement, not one can be described as a *literary* autograph. These texts are without exception scribal copies of literary

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

works, sometimes two or more steps removed from the original authors' texts, now vanished, upon which they are based. A cardinal rule of manuscript investigation holds that at the outset one must ask whether the work being studied is a copy or the author's original—and it must be treated as a copy unless investigation demonstrates beyond reasonable doubt that it is the autograph. This has always been my practice in studying Hebrew manuscripts, and to the best of my knowledge it is the practice of all others who make Hebrew historical manuscript investigation their chief pursuit. (In fact, the application of this principle to the study of the Qumran texts first led me to question the traditional view of their origin.)

That no Qumran text on parchment or papyrus has ever been demonstrated to have autographic features, while no other hard evidence exists to support the idea of activity of authors at Khirbet Qumran, directly contravenes the notion that the site was a motherhouse of Essenes or any other sectarians where their salient ideas were supposedly created. On the basis of architecture of the scripts and related pieces of evidence, all that may be fairly inferred is that the scrolls constitute remnants of libraries containing scribal copies of literary works, some of which were hidden away in jars furnished by inhabitants of the region.

There is, in addition, one special Qumran text that contains information highly damaging to the Qumran-Essene hypothesis, and that is the manuscript written on copper mentioned earlier. This text is composed of inventories of precious items hidden away in various places in Judaea. It contains a total of twelve columns, about five inventories to each, written in ordinary first-century Hebrew idiom—unlike most literary Qumran texts, whose language is earlier. That it is written on copper indicates the authors attached importance to it. The writers (several handwritings have been identified by the late David Wilmot) were not professional scribes, and the inventories are given without embellishment. As in the Bar Kokhba documents, here also one finds genuine toponyms of the Judaean wilderness, including Jericho, Masada, the Qidron gorge, the Achor valley, and still other names.

Of decisive importance is the fact that, in at least eight passages of this work, scrolls are mentioned as being buried adjacent to the treasures. What is more, at the end of the Copper Scroll, one reads that "in a pit . . . to the north of Kohlat . . . is hidden a copy of this writing together with its explanation." This shows clearly that the Copper Scroll was an autograph text whose contents were themselves copied down, apparently with augmentations, into another scroll, and that the latter was in turn hidden away for safekeeping.

This text thus has salient features of a documentary character—but

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the wealth-eschewing Essenes, said to have numbered no more than four thousand souls, could hardly have had treasures of the size described in it. The palpable place of origin of the treasures, artifacts, and books referred to in the Copper Scroll is Jerusalem. The surmise is reasonable that, before and during stages of the siege on the capital between 68 and 70 A.D., steps were taken to remove at least part of the valued belongings of the inhabitants and of the sizable treasures that had accumulated in the Temple by virtue of contributions of a large Jewish diaspora that existed even then.

The danger for the standard hypothesis posed by this text is manifest. Thus, many writers have felt obliged to reject its authenticity altogether, claiming that, while ancient, it is an imaginary and fictitious writing. On the other hand, almost all who accept it as genuine, while at the same time continuing to hold to the Qumran-Essene hypothesis, have claimed that this text simply had no connection with the other scrolls. That is, while upholding the claim of a living bond between the parchment and papyrus texts and the settlement below, those in this latter category deny the possibility of such a bond between the Copper Scroll and the settlement. The former group, on the contrary, in order to persevere in the conviction that the site was inhabited by Essenes, has to claim that the statements given in the Copper Scroll are untrue. Yet the non-literary nature of this text, the dry cataloging of the deposits, and the fact that this scroll was found in one of the Qumran caves and in the same first-century A.D. context as the other scrolls make either of these proposals extremely difficult to accept. A few writers claim the descriptions are authentic but that they refer only to treasures of the Essenes themselves—an idea, however, contradicted by every text so far known relating either to the numbers or the wealth of this sect.

What is more, the proposal to disregard the Copper Scroll as a significant text for the problem of Qumran origins cannot be considered in isolation, but must rather be seen in the context of the totality of proposals and assumptions that have been brought forward to support the traditional hypothesis. These include (but are not limited to) the following:

- That peace-loving Essenes guarded a military site and fought as warriors there.
- That celibate Essenes lived at or near Khirbet Qumran even though there is no general endorsement of celibacy to be found anywhere in the Qumran manuscripts.
- That two types of Essenes, marrying and non-marrying, both inhabited areas near the Khirbet Qumran site at the same time, and that Pliny simply mentioned only the celibate ones.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

- That the four thousand Essenes described by Josephus and Philo were in reality a much more important sect than had been thought, being the authors of at least most of the apocalyptic literature of the Jews.
- That in the Qumran fortress there was a manuscript-writing room where Essene monks composed and copied texts, although none of the autograph manuscripts that might attest to this literary creativity has ever been found, and although the room identified as this "scriptorium" was not found to contain a single scrap of parchment when excavated.
- That the Qumran settlement was the "laura" or "motherhouse" of the Essene movement, even though no legal deeds, letters, or other bona fide documentary evidence attesting to this have ever been discovered—and that the "Manual of Discipline" was the rule of conduct at the motherhouse, even though texts describing other modes of heterodox conduct have been found among the Qumran scrolls.
- That the mention of "Damascus" in a manuscript describing the migration of an ancient sect to that city is really an allusion to Qumran, and that descriptions of the discovery of manuscripts near Jericho during the first millennium A.D. were in fact allusions to such discoveries in earlier times also at Qumran.
- That the single Qumran scroll inscribed on copper and describing, in straightforward bookkeeping fashion, the burial of treasures and scrolls in the Judaean wilderness is either a mendacious or an irrelevant document—while scrolls found at Masada did not necessarily come from Jerusalem at all but rather, at least in part, from Qumran, being brought there by Essenes seeking refuge from the Roman onslaught.

Taken collectively, these claims constitute an impossible combination of ideas severely damaging to the traditional theory of Qumran origins. What is more, the Copper Scroll, once its contents are taken into consideration in the light of the Masada discoveries and other evidence, makes the mental gymnastics required to sustain the traditional hypothesis unnecessary and obsolete, while at the same time pointing clearly to the Jerusalem origin of all of the finds.

One of the most striking passages in the Copper Scroll is the statement (first seven lines of Column VII) that one is to dig at the northern opening of the "Cave of the Pillar" three cubits downward, where an amphora containing a book will be found and, underneath it, forty-two silver talents. This passage, strikingly, follows upon another to the effect that thirty-two talents are in a tomb located at the "Brook of the Dome . . . as [one is] coming from Jericho to Sekhakha." The Cave of the Pillar was evidently situated between Jericho and Sekhakha, an otherwise unknown place that could hardly have been more than several kilometers from Jericho. The passage clearly refers to the hiding of a

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

book in a cave near Jericho, but at the same time it was not one of the caves above Qumran, as the latter site is too far from Jericho to be identifiable with Sekhakha. Moreover, there is a statement at the beginning of Column VIII of the Copper Scroll that books are hidden along with ritual vessels at an aqueduct also apparently located near Jericho.

These documentary statements remarkably parallel those of Origen and Timotheus regarding the discovery of Hebrew manuscripts near the same city—but because the places mentioned in the Copper Scroll must be much closer to Jericho than Qumran is, they make the interpretation that the finds reported by Origen and Timotheus were earlier discoveries of manuscripts at Qumran more doubtful still. What emerges is that, at some time in the first century, Hebrew manuscripts were hidden away not only in the Qumran caves but in various places in the Judaean wilderness and the plain of Jericho; the burial of artifacts of great material value quite obviously emanating from Jerusalem took place in the same area at the same time. The statements of Origen, Timotheus, and the anonymous authors of the Copper Scroll thus all together show the arbitrary and untenable nature of the hypothesis that the scrolls found in the caves at Qumran belonged uniquely to sectarians ostensibly occupying the nearby settlement. On the contrary, when brought together these statements necessarily generate the conclusion that the Qumran manuscripts were part of a yet larger collection of scrolls and that their concealment was owing to a cause entirely different from the one proposed by supporters of the Qumran-Essene hypothesis. This cause is clearly revealed by the Masada discoveries.

At least from the time of the subjugation of Galilee, many of the inhabitants of Jerusalem must have made efforts to sequester the city's wealth as well as literature and other possessions of a spiritual nature. They would have acted no differently than have other cities under siege or soon to be attacked. As we know from Josephus (*War* IV.121–128), the Jerusalemites had ample warning of the intentions of the Romans. In the interval between the fall of Galilee (Nov. 67 A.D.) and the opening stages of the siege on the capital, however, Jerusalemites were free to come and go as they wished, and even during the siege had access to territories outside the walls. (For this reason Titus decided to build a new siege-wall entirely surrounding the city in the spring of 70 A.D.). Those charged with hiding artifacts of importance would clearly have sought to do so in areas the Romans did not yet control; but by the summer of 68 A.D. the only such territory was that portion of Judaea lying to the east and south of the city—that area, in other words, where Hebrew scrolls were discovered in the third, ninth, and twentieth centuries.

The configuration of details that thus emerges is the following: On

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the one hand there was the pressing situation of the Jews in Jerusalem in 69 and 70 A.D., while on the other there exists the phenomenon of discovery, and thus of prior hiding, of manuscripts in caves both near Jericho and Wadi Qumran. In addition, the Masada manuscript discoveries ineluctably lead back toward the capital. The Copper Scroll describes the hiding of various treasures in certain specific places, mentioned by name, that the author located within and near some of the wadis leading out from Jerusalem into the Judaean wilderness.

Thus we see that the very phenomena that constitute grave anomalies in the Qumran-Essene hypothesis are those facts that point emphatically to the scrolls' Jerusalem origin. The reason no autographs of literary works but only copies have been found at Qumran is that the writings came from libraries; the great number of scroll remnants points to their origin in a large center of learning and study in Hellenistic and Roman Palestine, such as only Jerusalem was before 70 A.D. Timotheus's ninth-century description ("a dwelling within the rocks . . . in which were many books") likewise indicates that the scrolls found near Jericho were from a library or libraries originating in a spiritual center. That these collections do not derive from any one sect is shown by the conflicting doctrines and because scrolls having no demonstrably sectarian bias far outweigh those that do. If original letters and legal documents have not been found at Qumran—in contrast to the discoveries of the Bar Kokhba period—it is for the very same reason that the Qumran scrolls derive from libraries rather than from archives. The archives of Jerusalem had been destroyed by fire in 66 A.D., during the inter-factional strife raging there at that time—which Josephus has described in vivid detail. Because of the loss of these archival records, no documentary texts of the years immediately before 70 A.D., but only remnants of the libraries that evidently abounded in the city, have been found subsequently in the Judaean wilderness.

Thus, the total evidence, accumulated after four decades of discovery and investigation, no longer warrants acquiescence in the theory formulated at the very outset of the Qumran discoveries that the manuscripts belonged to a sect, whether of Essenes or others, living at the Khirbet Qumran site. Rather, the evidence now indicates the much wider phenomenon of concealment of manuscripts in caves throughout the Judaean wilderness, as well as the removal of other such manuscripts to Masada, during the war with Rome of 67–73 A.D. The great abundance of hidden books and treasures as well as the geographical configuration of discoveries are facts that point directly to Jerusalem as the center of the activity of concealment, and that require an explanation for that concealment in consonance with historical events taking place there at the time. The one major event that could possibly have impelled the Jerusa-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

lemites to conceal their books and treasures was the Roman siege on the city and the circumstances that preceded it.

There is no reason to believe that the writings hidden away were created by any one sect in ancient Judaism. Rather, it becomes evident by the diversity of their ideas that the scrolls represent various aspects of the actual state of Judaism at that time—with all its sectarian and heterodox complexities; and they prove that the Hebrew authors at the turn of the era had become greatly concerned with eschatological and messianic themes. The scrolls were written a century and more before the age of the Tannaitic masters who molded rabbinic Judaism in the wake of the destruction of the Second Temple, and thus reflect aspects of religious and social thinking not characteristic of rabbinic Judaism. This thinking finds its echo in some of the writings of the apocrypha and pseudepigrapha created by intertestamental Judaism during the two centuries before the war with Rome, but it now emerges as a far more complex, richly textured, and subtle phenomenon than what was known. The ideas preserved in these texts show clearly that the scrolls could not have been mere literary relics of a small fringe sect, but rather represent writings of the Jewish people as a whole in an age when Judaism was undergoing change, rethinking, and often turbulent development. They are an integral part of the literary heritage of that people in its period of development before the rise of Christianity, and, as such, are manifestly of far greater value for knowledge of the history of culture than writers have been wont to suggest.

III

In the decade that has passed since I began publishing my views on the Qumran-Essene hypothesis and the Jerusalem origin of the scrolls, guardians of the traditional theory have expended little effort to respond to criticism or to resolve the contradictions inhering in that theory. It is as though a need were being met through insistence that those many writings came from that small band of devout sectarians, as if—to borrow an apt metaphor from E. R. Dodds's discussion of "Orphism" in *The Greeks and the Irrational*—unrealized spiritual aspirations were in our own time being projected, unconsciously or not, onto the screen of antiquity. So deeply is the belief in the Essene origin of the scrolls embedded in contemporary scholarly consciousness, and so widely circulated in print, that it seems not to stand in need of protection from critical inquiry. Even when, as has been happening with increasing frequency, the term *Essene* is, subtly or otherwise, changed to "sectarian" in scholarly treatment of the scrolls' origins, the underlying view that all of these texts emanated from a single heterodox community

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

living in a remote outpost of the Judaean wilderness remains unchanged, the contradictions in this view being met mainly with silence.

This may be seen, for example, in the treatment of a recently published Qumran text of great importance, the so-called "Angelic Liturgy" or "Song of the Sabbath Sacrifice." Publication of this text, as of a considerable number of other non-biblical Qumran writings, was entrusted more than thirty years ago to John Strugnell. Most of the texts in his jurisdiction have yet to appear, but some have been entrusted to students of his for publication in the form of doctoral dissertations, and the "Angelic Liturgy" is one of these. (We leave aside the question whether these unpublished texts should appropriately have been assigned to doctoral candidates of any of the original team members, when to this day productive scholars who by chance had no connection with that original team are not allowed to study them.) The "Angelic Liturgy" was published only a few years ago by Carol Newsom (*Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice: A Critical Edition*, 1985). It was this scroll, of which a fragmentary copy was discovered also at Masada, that led Yigael Yadin, shortly after the discovery, to suggest that Essenes from Qumran brought at least this fragment there, but perhaps also others found at Masada. Edmund Wilson then seconded and developed this idea in *The Dead Sea Scrolls, 1947–1969*. Neither Yadin nor other scholars, nor Wilson, as much as hinted at the possibility that refugees from Jerusalem, who formed the main group of Masada's defenders, brought these scrolls with them to Masada. In fact, use of the term *Jerusalem* is studiously avoided by all adherents of the traditional hypothesis when dealing with the Masada texts.

Now in Carol Newsom's study of the "Angelic Liturgy" she poses a revealing question. "One must ask of every manuscript found at Qumran," she states, "whether it is a composition of the Qumran community itself or a pre-Qumran composition copied and preserved in the Qumran library."

Newsom thus excludes from consideration, and refrains from mentioning, the hypothesis of Jerusalem origin of the scrolls. The important question provoked by the discovery of fragments of the "Angelic Liturgy" at Masada is relegated by Newsom to a note (page 74, note 11) where, referring to the view of Yadin, she states that the "presence of a copy of the ['Angelic Liturgy'] at Masada is perhaps best explained by assuming that it was taken there by a member of the Qumran community who participated in the revolt against Rome. . . ." The salient question, necessarily requiring extensive examination in a chapter on the provenance of this text, is thus relegated to a footnote, again without mention of the problem of Jerusalem, yet with an endorsement of the explanation offered by Yadin that puzzlingly lacks enthusiasm. All of this has caused

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

so notable a Qumranologist as F. Garcia-Martinez to raise the question of adequacy of the author's treatment of this problem (see *Biblica* 69 [1988], pages 138–146). Garcia-Martinez himself claims that satisfactory answers in response to the Jerusalem hypothesis, and cogently explaining on another basis the presence of Qumran fragments at Masada, are available, but he has yet to put them into print.

Garcia-Martinez is one of the band of scholars that attended a new kind of conference on the Dead Sea scrolls held in the spring of 1987 under the sponsorship of the Polish Academy of Sciences in Cracow. Unlike any preceding conference of which I am aware, this one dared to set aside the treatment of the Qumran-Essene hypothesis as an axiomatic truth and to consider at length the theory of Jerusalem origin. It will be followed by another conference under the same sponsorship later this year, when the fundamental problem will be further explored. At least some scholars have begun to talk with one another about this issue, and it is of great interest that it should be in Poland, of all the European countries, that the debate is now encouraged.

A main theme of the forthcoming conference in Cracow—which will focus on the personality of a charismatic figure described in several Qumran texts—bears the title "The Teacher of Righteousness and His Role in the Qumran Texts." Noticing the last word of the title—which implies a certain distancing from the traditional notion that the texts necessarily originated in a single sectarian community—the organizers of another European conference (to be held at the Qumran Institute in Groningen) now respond with a title of their own: "The Texts of Qumran and the Origins of the Community." This title, and the Groningen conference, thus themselves turn into an effort to bolster the traditional hypothesis. The debate will focus, according to the announcement from Groningen, only on whether the "Community" ultimately originated in Palestine or (as one writer has now come to believe) in Babylonia; its existence is tenaciously clung to as a foregone conclusion.

On the other hand, in France—so often a crucible of new ideas—the only Qumranologist to break his silence in the face of the emerging problem has up to now been E. M. Laperrousaz, a student of the late André Dupont-Sommer and one of the last surviving French scholars to have taken part in the original excavations. Laperrousaz, responding to my French study of the subject (*Annales: Economies, Sociétés, Civilisations*, Sept.–Oct. 1985, pages 1133–1149), attempts to protect the traditional hypothesis only with traditional explanations—and virtually without considering the theory of Jerusalem origin as its alternative. His defense and my reply to him have appeared relatively recently (*Annales*, Nov.–Dec. 1987, pages 1305–1320), and interested readers will be able to judge for themselves whether his efforts to protect the traditional view have been successful.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The recent French translation of intertestamental writings published in the Pléiade series (*La Bible. Ecrits Intertestamentaires*, NRF-Gallimard, 1987) presents those writings not according to their various themes or genres but rather as two distinct groups: those discovered at Qumran and those known beforehand—an awkwardness arising solely from the editors' fundamental belief in the special, sectarian nature of Qumran and the manuscripts found in the caves. Some of the writings of the apocrypha and pseudepigrapha have (as mentioned above) turned up, fragmentarily, among the Qumran scrolls, and for the editors these themselves become Essene writings, even though showing no affinities with Essene doctrines as described in the classical sources. The authors do not as much as raise the possibility that the claimed sectarians might have had other books in their possession besides their own heterodox writings. The failure of the editors to deal in their introduction with the hypothesis of Jerusalem origin has been bravely queried by a recent reviewer (J.-L. Schlegel in *Le Monde*, Dec. 25, 1987, page 13), but the many readers of the *Ecrits Intertestamentaires* who are unaware of the review and the debate in *Annales* will, in effect, be induced to assimilate a no longer tenable hypothesis of Qumran origins, presented in the form of a serious and beautifully printed translation of the intertestamental writings.

A similar treatment characterizes the new edition of G. Vermes's English translation of the Qumran writings (*The Dead Sea Scrolls in English*, Penguin, 1987). Vermes in his introduction continues to portray the existence of a sectarian community at Qumran as a given fact. At the same time he avoids dealing with most of the substantive problems for this hypothesis now brought into the open. In fact, the author refrains even from including in his work a translation of the Copper Scroll. He does discuss this text in a brief appendix, but claims, in explaining its non-appearance in his book, that it "does not fall within the scope of the present book since it is a non-religious document" (page 308). This is a most surprising explanation, since Vermes nowhere in his introduction speaks of an intent to publish only the religious writings found at Qumran, and indeed much of the introduction is given over to historical rather than strictly religious questions. Might not readers have been allowed to judge for themselves, by study of an English rendering of this scroll, what its significance might be for the question of why so many writings were hidden in the Judaean wilderness just at the time of the war with Rome?

During the past few years, another manuscript of highly interesting content has been adduced to bolster the traditional view of Qumran origins. This manuscript, "Some of the Deeds of the Torah," or *MMT* after the initials of its Hebrew title, is another of the group entrusted to

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

John Strugnell. The text is not yet published, but it is clear from descriptions so far available that the basic claim of the editors, to the effect that it fits satisfactorily into the framework of the traditional hypothesis, is without foundation. This may be seen from the discussion appearing in the *Jerusalem Post* magazine of June 14, 1985. The article states, "Among the mass of material from Qumran, no letter has ever before been identified. This has led one scrolls scholar to question whether the documents were in fact from a local Qumran archive, since such an archive might be expected to include correspondence. However, [the editors of the text] maintain that the use of the second person clearly establishes their document as a letter."

Readers following the controversy over the origins of the Qumran scrolls would of course be led to understand this as referring to my explanation of their origin, and by the wording of the statement might be easily persuaded to believe that the new Qumran text in some way puts an end to the problem. The new text, however, is no more a genuine "document" or "letter" than are any of the other Qumran texts. While a full edition of the new manuscript fragments is not yet available, it is evident, from both the article's description and an accompanying photograph of a part of the text, that the editors have simply identified a literary epistle, such as those found for example in the Apocrypha and the New Testament—and not the original epistle but fragments of scribal copies of it.

My criticism, however, has been unambiguous from the beginning. No original legal instruments, personal letters, or other autograph documents—such as those discovered of the Bar Kokhba period—nor any autographs (as opposed to scribal copies) of literary texts have, with the exception of the Copper Scroll, ever been found at Qumran; and that includes these new fragments as well (which one of the editors was good enough to show me several years ago at the Rockefeller Museum). The lack of such autograph texts continues to jeopardize the hypothesis of Qumran-Essene origins. If the site were indeed the motherhouse of a sectarian movement for two hundred and more years where Essene (or other) sectarians created doctrines and literature of their movement, one would expect to find some specific indication of such original activity among the hundreds of manuscript finds. The new fragments are merely scribal copies of a literary text, as are all of the other Qumran texts so far known except the Copper Scroll.

What is more, the efforts of the editors of the new fragments to harmonize the contents of the epistle specifically with the Qumran-Essene hypothesis raise puzzling new questions. For example, the article states that the text "is astonishing less for its contents than for its writer and addressee"—but later states that the "opening salutation is

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

missing. This presumably included the identities of both sender and addressee." Thus it is only the hypothesis of the text's editors (namely, that the writer was the Teacher of Righteousness and the addressee the "Wicked Priest" mentioned in other passages of the Qumran texts) that may legitimately be called astonishing. No personalities at all are mentioned by name in the new text. The article also asserts that the author of the text "spells out the religious rules . . . followed by the breakaway sect at Qumran," and yet later on states that, according to the curator of the Shrine of the Book, "the [twenty] specific differences listed *are all new* [my italics] but no more significant than the differences already known." How is one to fathom this conclusion? If not one of the religious rules of the new manuscript is identical with those in other Qumran texts, if the identity of neither the "sender" nor the "recipient" of the epistle is actually known, and if in addition there is no geographical term in the text that would localize either of them, then by what legitimacy is the conclusion drawn that the text is doctrinally related to other scrolls of a heterodox character found in the Qumran caves, or that it originated at the Qumran fortress? That at least three of the laws in the new text are, as the article itself somewhat obtusely admits, identical with legal positions held by the Sadducees, while none whatsoever can be compared with legal rules specifically attributable to the Essenes, clearly points to a conclusion much different than that urged in the *Jerusalem Post* article. Without forced exegesis, the new manuscript simply illustrates the doctrinal diversity of the scrolls.

The article in the *Jerusalem Post* deals with the traditional hypothesis as a series of facts, not as a hypothesis. Thus it states: "The archaeologists would in time recognize that Qumran had been the headquarters of the sect which wrote the scrolls. . . . Cave Four had been the sect's library. . . ." The fairness of these assertions is doubtful. There is obviously a great difference between attributing a theory to a group or even a preponderance of scholars, and treating it as though it were an established fact. For this reason particularly, it is surprising that the curator of the Shrine of the Book—where many of the scrolls are housed—appears in the *Jerusalem Post* article not as an objective observer but as one actively supporting the editors of the new text in their particular and, at the least, questionable position. While museum curators are fully entitled to their views as individuals, this obviously does not absolve the directors of the Israel Museum, of which the Shrine is a part, of the basic responsibility of describing the Dead Sea scrolls on exhibit in an objective way and, contrary to the present practice, without portraying any particular theory of Qumran origins as a given fact. The museological spillover of the current treatment is obvious in the catalog of the recent exhibition of Hebrew manuscripts and books held at the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

New York Public Library (*A Sign and a Witness—2000 Years of Hebrew Books and Illuminated Manuscripts*, 1988). The public can hardly be said to be well served by the fact that the chapter in this work devoted to the scrolls keeps the question of their Jerusalem origin a secret, while treating the traditional theory as an uncontested truth.

Why this treatment has until now almost universally been accorded the Qumran-Essene hypothesis is not difficult to fathom. In the preceding pages, the unfolding process of discovery has been traced that led scholars first to create the hypothesis and then, with their strong assent frozen into print, to seek to enhance it even as contradictory evidence began emerging. The doctoral dissertations, learned essays, and books of mature writers for which that hypothesis has served as the fundamental axiom are now legion, and acquiescence in it approaches that of a virtual article of faith. Scholars in general are no different than other men and women in being loath to change their ideas, particularly if they have garnered fame or recognition for having expressed them; they are equally loath to see those ideas challenged. And when general agreement to a particular theory solidifies, one cannot but gain a certain comfort through joining in its acclaim. All the more is this true of the ideas created in the wake of discovery of the Qumran scrolls—manuscripts found in the land of the Bible and imposing themselves, by the new fact of their being, on traditional structures of belief that had been worked out and monumentalized in the Western world's religious traditions over the long course of centuries.

The accumulated discoveries of recent decades now beat against the walls protecting those structures. All serious students of the scrolls—hidden away, it will be remembered, in approximately 69 A.D.—know that not one fragment of any of the Gospels is found among them. They likewise know that not one rabbinic dictum—that is, of the kind thought to have been popular by the turn of the era—is represented in any of those texts. If early Palestinian Christianity and rabbinic Judaism already existed as movements before the destruction of the Second Jewish Commonwealth in 70 A.D., as is commonly believed, there is at all events not the least snatch of a saying attributable to either movement among the Qumran scrolls. This obliges one to ask whether the absence is because all of the newly found scrolls were created by a small group of celibate monks living in the desert who neither wanted nor had the need to read the words and sayings of these new movements—or (if not for an as yet unfathomed reason) because they did not yet exist as movements or were only then coming into being, as the sacrificial cult of ancient Judaism crumbled under the weight of the Roman military success. It is fair to say that both by instinct and training the vast majority of scholars dealing with the Qumran texts would, if pressed, opt for the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

first alternative, which is in fact what has happened. Yet this does not mean that the scientific palatability of that option has been accordingly enhanced. Faith and historical investigation do not always work in harmony with one another.

What the scrolls do contain, among other compositions, are many new works in Hebrew that strongly resemble the Jewish intertestamental writings—writings that eventually lost their popularity among the Jews, are not even taught in many institutions of Jewish learning (surprising and regrettable as that may be), and have in the main survived in translations appended, paradoxically, to Christian but not to Jewish Bibles. These and other new texts from Qumran have made possible a much fuller reconstruction of the Judaism of that period, which in many ways was radically different from both its biblical predecessor and the rabbinic Judaism that followed. The ideas of this intermediate Judaism are not always familiar or comforting, and sometimes they even startle, or inspire repugnance. But they are there nevertheless, and the existential reality of that Judaism is beyond question. Whether university scholars will continue indefinitely to make the contents of those texts seem to be the corpus of beliefs of a minority sect isolated in the barren reaches of the Judaean wilderness is a question whose answer is still too early to venture. It is, however, becoming obvious that while the problems and contradictions inhering in the traditional hypothesis continue to fester, traditional Qumranologists have yet to offer a cogent refutation of the theory of Jerusalem origin. And much depends on the outcome—our understanding of Christian origins and of ancient Judaism and its evolution, how we might henceforth view and treat the intertestamental writings, the manner in which the Bible came to be what it is, and still other issues that, for those concerned with the question of who we are, matter profoundly. Thus, as the fifth decade of Qumran research gets under way, it will be of interest to observe in which direction the debate proceeds.

Barbara Tuchman
1912–1989

Member, THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR *Editoral Board,*
1979–1985

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Poetry Workshop (First Semester)

JOHN FREDERICK NIMS

It's time. I find them waiting in the hall.
Sun-burnished Claire, with Jane not plain at all
—She's majoring in glamor. Gloria's here
With Megan, Liz, and Leila. Guenevere,
Already ripe for legend. That's our class.

In skirt or jeans, they settle, start to pass
Poems around, assort them. Check their hair.
Then read their verse in turn.

It's my despair,
That verse! For some relief, my reason flees
To plan harangues, in fantasy, like these:

"Dear, you start writing, you're an instant hag!
Wizened and blear, spine crooked, feet that drag.
From the crisp lip, what bulbous generality:
You write 'enamored of your personality'
When you mean *love*; for *naked* you write 'clad
In Nature's finery'; or, intending *sad*,
'Wet crackers in gloom-soup'; then soar to sing
Paeans to 'lunar moon' or 'vernal spring.'

Or worse, left-over beatnik, schooled to cuss,
You think, to write a poem's make a muss.

Must your own words lampoon you—you of all!—
Gawky graffiti on a chapel wall?
Your figure, now, 's in high relief—not flat—
Incised here, and there salient. Learn from that:
Don't write on one dead level: emphasize.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Let your wit sparkle sometimes, like your eyes.
Fine turn of ankle—and why not of phrase?
Lips in live color—and yet talk in greys?

Words should be lean and lithe, compact as muscles
Our marathoners build—not stuffed in bustles.
Thought should be there like bone, that's best unseen;
Emotion run like blood through all. I mean,
Look at yourself: you're total *ars poetica*,
For realms of gold (see Keats) the one right *Baedeker*.
There!—in your looking glass The Vision's found
(Though here you're fragrant, warm, and in the round).
Study, as Yeats said, what your mirror shows:
Lines elegant with entelechy. Trust in those.
'To thine own self'—see what it means?—'be true.'
Why? To show soul, as all fine bodies do."

But no!—no talking that way. Realer far
Than selves you play-act are the selves you are.
No: You'd be hurt, flick skirts and flounce your hair
—So ponies paw the earth. I see you there:
Head high, you stalk away. Such rhythms flow
As thrill the heart—then break it.

So don't go.
Just sit here with me, wordless, and effulge.
I've no more pet opinions to indulge.
Or, talk of what you will. Vacations spent,
Summers to come. Relax and loll, content
To be, if not our laureate, our delight:
The perfect poem none of us can write.

✪ JOHN FREDERICK NIMS is the former editor of *Poetry*. His recent publications include *Sappho to Valéry: Poems in Translation* and *A Local Habitation: Essays on Poetry*.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Whitman

KARL SHAPIRO

Like Queen Victoria he used the regal *we*,
Meaning the disciples of *Leaves of Grass*,
The American Bible, they literally believed;
Sat by the hour to photographers,
The Open Shirt frontispiece,
The Good Grey, the Jesus, the Laughing Philosopher,
The Old Poet in the crumpled high-crown hat
Gazing in rapture at the butterfly
    Perched on his forefinger
(It turns out was a cardboard butterfly);
To Tennyson the greatest of his time,
Inviting Walt to sail to the Isle of Wight;
Our first and probably our only guru,
Whose opinion of niggers (his designation) was low,
But worshipped Lincoln to whom he scribed
    His second greatest song;
Who opened the Closet but wouldn't come out;
Who lived in a kind of luxurious poverty,
Housekeeper, male nurse, amanuensis, carriage,
    On the bounty of admirers,
Adored as Gandhi or a Dr. Schweitzer,
Visited by Oscar Wilde and English titles,
    In Camden, New Jersey;
Two hundred pounds of genius and hype,
Nature-mystic who designed his tomb
Solid as an Egyptian pyramid;
American to the soles of his boots,
Outspoken as Christ or Madame Blavatsky,
Messiah, Muse of the Modern, Mother.

✪ KARL SHAPIRO is the author, most recently, of *New and Selected Poems* and *The Younger Son: An Autobiography*.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

John Crowe Ransom

As I Remember Him

CLEANTH BROOKS

EVERY POET to some degree reveals himself in his poetry, from the most frantic "confessional" poet who makes it a point of honor to tell all, on to the most reserved of our classical poets who prefer to keep their personal affairs to themselves. John Crowe Ransom was not interested in providing confessions, but three of his poems in particular served to make revelations of his personal life. "Tom, Tom the Piper's Son" is a good example. (I quote here the original title and text, which I prefer to the new title and revised text that he printed in his *Selected Poems* in 1974.)

> Grim in my little black coat as the sleazy beetle,
> And gone of hue,
> Lonely, a man reputed for softening little,
> Loving few—
>
> Mournfully going where men assemble, unfriended, pushing
> With laborious wares,
> And glaring with little grey eyes at whom I am brushing,
> Who would with theirs—
>
> Full of my thoughts as I trudge here and trundle yonder,
> Eyes on the ground
> Tricked by white birds or tall women into no wonder,
> And no sound—

Even here the "confession" is that he has gained the reputation of keeping his own counsel. As the poem develops we find that this grim little man who seems almost conscientiously nondescript is actually ambitious, proud, and passionate, and the poem thus quickly develops into a fresh and sharply featured descant on the irony of outward

✪ CLEANTH BROOKS is Gray Professor of Rhetoric Emeritus at Yale University and the author of a number of books of literary criticism, among them, *Modern Poetry and the Tradition* and *William Faulkner: The Yoknapatawpha Country.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

appearance masking inner reality, and so applies to many of us. But I am interested here in the way in which the poet in a mood of ironic self-deprecation sets forth the way in which he feels he must appear to the world around him: the little glaring grey eyes, the sense of being the withdrawn and reticent man, the born loner, inattentive of others, a man whose emotions are bottled up inside him, a little scuttling beetle of a man.

The poem is a caricature of the small, stocky (though not pudgy), trim gentleman that Ransom was, but caricatures in their overstatement do convey some positive truths.

Another poem, this time more directly revelatory of his poetry, is the charming *"Agitato ma non troppo,"* which prefaces the volume *Chills and Fever* (1924). Again, I prefer the more compact original version.

The poet acknowledges

I have a grief . . .

But the poem has none of the august majesty of a great mature poet nor the poignance of a passionate young poet. It is not

like Dante's fury
When Beatrice was given him to bury;

nor does it resemble the note sounded

When the young heart was hit, you know
How Percy Shelley's reed sang tremolo. . . .

Ransom develops the theme a little further and then concludes the poem:

I will be brief,
Assuredly I have a grief,
And I am shaken; but not as a leaf.

This poem provides an accurate account of the tonality and range of Ransom's poetry—the emotion is there, very real, completely genuine, credible, but the poet is never overmastered by it: the poet, one feels, is always in control of himself. If the label "a great minor poet" be not a contradiction in terms, and I think that it is not, it fits Ransom perfectly.

The validation of this description, if challenged, could be supported by the citation of poem after poem. I think that the case at this date requires no argument, though I mean later in this essay to provide some

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

illustrations of the way in which the irony or pathos or simple quiet happiness of a human situation is convincingly rendered.

At this point, however, I want to mention a third poem in which Ransom confesses to a special and, by many an unsuspected, trait: his tendency to criticize the conventional wisdom, to question the dominant orthodoxy. Ten lines will illustrate. The poet imagines others saying:

> "He crieth on our dogmas, Counterfeit!
> And no man's bubble 'scapeth his sharp thorn.
>
> "Nor he respecteth duly our tall steeple,
> But solitary poring on his book,
> Heareth our noise and hardly offereth look,
> Nor liveth neighbourly with these the people."
>
> With reason, friends, I am complained upon,
> Who am a headstrong man, sentenced from birth
> To love unusual gods beyond all earth,
> And the easy gospels bruited hither and yon.

This may come as an unexpected revelation to those who think of Ransom as the mannerly, indeed quite courtly, Southern gentleman, who became the stout defender of what many Americans thought a hopelessly provincial culture.

Yet his sharp differences in ideas and attitudes from the Southern culture he sought to defend and on occasion from the notions of his closest friends ought to be noted. I shall have special occasion to refer to it later in this essay. His independence of familial and tribal beliefs, even when he felt strongly the filial and tribal bond, seems to me one of his salient traits. He would in effect later repudiate the religion of his father, a Methodist clergyman, and yet at the same time revere his father and his father's office, and he would further the intellectual careers of his young protégés, like myself, while at the same time pointing out the limitations of their intellectual positions and their disagreements with his. Such was a triumph of good nature and loving concern over what must have been often an intellectual exasperation, but it never involved a softening of the rigor of his own position.

Such personal traits as these poems reveal to me now were not evident to me when I first encountered Ransom on the campus of Vanderbilt University. As for his personal appearance and manner, yes: the little grey eyes, the trim figure of a man just below early middle age and the sense of a person reserved and even rather remote—all of these thoroughly applied to him. But I had no sense of the inner man with his tremendous intellectual energy and his great gifts of the imagination.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

This first conception or rather misconception remained even after he had become one of my teachers at Vanderbilt and remained through much of my college career. In due time I did indeed come to admire Ransom's poetry, and today I regard him as one of the finest minor poets writing in the English language of our century. Yet I never felt that I understood him—or even knew with anything like full comprehension the inner man.

I believe if Mr. Ransom had known this, it might have surprised him. For he was later to say that he and I were as much alike as peas in a pod: we were both the sons of Methodist preachers. We had both grown up in Tennessee. Both had got early a solid training in Latin, Greek, and mathematics—all in the tradition of the Old South, which resembled that of the English public schools.

We had both attended and received our B.A.'s from Vanderbilt University and had both gone on to Oxford as Rhodes Scholars. We had both ended up in English departments in universities in the South that did not in those days set any excessive valuation on instructors who taught a subject as commonplace and to their eyes as unimportant as "English."

So much for our likeness in nurture and cultural background. Here Ransom's homely metaphor, "peas in a pod," makes entire sense. As I reread *Gentleman in a Dust Coat*, Daniel Young's biography of Ransom, I pick up other details of Ransom's early life that match easily with those of my own.

Thus, we had shared a life of genteel poverty in a Methodist parsonage in those days; the necessary counting of pennies; the worry when mid-autumn arrived and the pastoral appointments were read out and our family found out that we would stay on at least one more year in the town in which we were then living and would not have to move a hundred miles away, with new friends to make and a new school to attend. We also acquired a fierce family loyalty and a concern for, and a participation in, the problems that our mother and father had to face.

In reading Young's biography I even found mention of actual people whom I knew who had also touched John Ransom's life. For instance, at Oxford, Ransom, as Young tells us, took to lunch one day a "Miss Ann Hefley, daughter of a Methodist minister from Memphis." Her father was one of my father's good friends, and as a six-year-old child I remember "Miss Hefley." It was indeed a small world, pretty much their own, that the sons and daughters of Southern Methodist parsons inhabited.

So in spite of what Ransom and I later grew up to be and in spite of the vast differences of talent and achievement between us, I ought to have been able to understand him rather well. But I did not and I do not

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

now. I still have to say what Donald Davidson said to Allen Tate, both friends of Ransom: "I have never been able to understand that man. . . ." Davidson, after all, as Ransom's associate and colleague for years, had had a better opportunity to observe him than I had had.

Yet Ransom, whether I now understand him or not, made an enormous impression on my life and in a variety of ways, although he was not always aware of it. In the classroom, however, he influenced me hardly at all. I signed up for one of his classes in my second year at Vanderbilt, but within a week I dropped the course, for it was plain that I was not up to it and besides it did not interest me. Later I did take a course in writing with him, and I must have learned something, but except for various remarks that I remember having heard him make, only a few of which had anything to do with the writing process, I am not conscious now of having carried anything away from his instruction.

My experience was thus very different from Robert Penn Warren's experience in which there was apparently an almost instant meeting of minds between the precocious young freshman and the poet just approaching his great productive years. Warren has frequently spoken of that most fruitful association and the ease with which it came about.

I have no one to blame but myself, for the difficulty obviously lay in me. Perhaps "blame" is not the accurate term. Again, let me say, I was simply not up to it—too raw, still too confused about my aims and purposes. But again, other students shared my difficulty. Ransom set no great store by formal lectures, and he made no pretensions to being an inspiring teacher. His comments on the literary work being discussed were deliberately kept in low key. He was at his best in talking to the individual when some sort of personal relation had been established. It was not a matter of Ransom's indifference and certainly contained no element of intellectual arrogance. He simply knew that one could not force the horses to drink even if the waters to which the typically wild, young colt had been led were those issuing from the true Pierian spring. The process of teaching had to be in some real sense a participation, a shared slaking of a real thirst. I was not to discover all this until some years later in 1931 when I had my first real conversations with him while I was at Oxford and he and his family were spending a year in England.

Nevertheless, his very presence on the Vanderbilt campus in the 1920s was a powerful influence on my plans for the future. For in my last year at prep school, I had begun to discover poetry, and now to find at Vanderbilt that real live people were writing and publishing poetry settled matters for me. I wanted to be connected in some way with this marvelous romantic enterprise. John Crowe Ransom was a practicing poet. Never mind that he didn't look in the least like the pictures of Byron or Shelley. Never mind either that I could not for the life of me

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

make anything of his poetry. (My training and personal impulses prepared me for only the romantics.)

There were, of course, other incitements than Ransom. There was Donald Davidson, who was also a poet and whose brother for one year was my roommate. Davidson was clearly some kind of romantic. Most important of all there was Robert Penn Warren, whom I was fortunate enough to have met in my freshman year. Warren was, as a student, actually publishing poetry and, out of pure kindness, had taken some notice of me. Our relationship at Vanderbilt was brief. He was off to graduate school at the end of my freshman year. But for me it was important, and indeed it was to bear quite unexpected fruit many years later.

In my own senior year, I at last began to grow up. I had found among my classmates other students who had literary interests. We set to work to collect and edit and get printed a little volume of student verse. We confided what we were doing to Ransom and Davidson, the principal Fugitives still on the Vanderbilt faculty, and got their blessing, but the relation scarcely amounted to anything like intimacy. We knew it did not and did not presume upon it. Ransom, for example, had shown us a kindly interest, but to me he was still a rather remote presence.

I did come to some understanding of his poetry, however. It happened easily and suddenly. I was in a friend's dormitory room one evening, rather idly chatting when I opened a volume of Ransom's poetry lying there on the table before me and started reading—really reading, for I had gone over the poems many times before. Suddenly, the scales fell from my eyes. The code was broken, the poems became "readable." I do not mean that they became magically transparent. I continue to find fresh meanings in them and depths I had not noticed before. But a serious blockage had suddenly disappeared. I was now a true convert.

Two years later in 1929 when at Oxford I met up with Warren again, we had much talk about Ransom, and I learned for the first time of the plans to publish the collection of essays that appeared in 1930 with the title *I'll Take My Stand.* Warren was at that time working on his own contribution to it.

I already knew or later came to know all but one of the contributors. I read the book over and over. I found some of the essays more congenial and some more difficult than others. But I tried my best to assimilate the whole position, philosophical and political. I learned a great deal from my intensive study.

I doubted that the book had any future as a political instrument. I was well aware of the incredulous jeers it would provoke. One of the most important things that the reception of the book taught me was the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

commitment of the American public, north and south, east and west, to progress as a sacred dogma, the truth of which simply could not be questioned. It was one of those truths so plainly self-evident that it could not be rationally discussed. The person who could not wholeheartedly assent to it was either teasing or else touched in the head, or perhaps, if he still persisted, a real subversive.

Ransom's essay was one of the most philosophical expositions in the collection, and, to my mind, one of the most able as a well-constructed argument. It represented him at his very best as a thinker and as a stylist. He was also the principal author, as I was later to learn, of the "Introduction: A Statement of Principles." This short account manifests the same virtues as his essay: clarity and force. Here is Ransom on industrialism and its labor-saving devices.

> But a fresh labor-saving device introduced into an industry does not emancipate the laborers in that industry so much as it evicts them.

Such has proved to be a sound observation. One of the most obvious results has been in agriculture. Some fifty years ago about 40 percent of our population worked on farms; now, the farm workers are under 10 percent. In general, more of our people are now at work in distributing and marketing products than in actually producing them. The shift has been praised for eliminating much heavy manual work, much that is sheer drudgery. But desk work can be a form of drudgery, too, and much of it is.

Two more of Ransom's statements touch on this problem.

> It is an inevitable consequence of industrial progress that production greatly outruns the rate of natural consumption. To overcome the disparity, the producers, disguised as the pure idealists of progress, must coerce and wheedle the public into being loyal and steady consumers, in order to keep the machines running. So the rise of modern advertising—along with its twin, personal salesmanship—is the most significant development of our industrialism.
>
> The regular act of applied science is to introduce into labor a labor-saving device or a machine. Whether this is a benefit depends on how far it is advisable to save labor.

Again, the elimination of drudgery seems generally a gain; but the value of time saved from labor will depend very much on how the saved time is spent. If the worker is left only with time to kill, or with a life that is boring, or with only shallow and superficial amusements to pass the time, he is really little better off. If his work is interesting, it can be enjoyable. A true artist will "work" at his art even if he doesn't need the money he can get for it. Fortunate is the man whose job provides a

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

decent living but who also has a job that he likes to do. Yet such statements as I have quoted from Ransom's "Introduction" could not be popular. In a society so thoroughly committed to secularism and progress as ours was by 1930, they could not appeal to the man in the street—nor, as a matter of fact, to the intellectuals. Mechanization had indeed taken command.

An acute observer of our contemporary culture, Eric Voegelin, has remarked that "the contemplative critics of Western Culture had discerned the disintegration of society behind the facade of progress" and that "the progress of science and industry is no substitute for the order of society." But such contemplative critics, few if any of whom are on the political left, usually turn out to be poets and men of letters, writers like Paul Valéry, William Butler Yeats, T. S. Eliot, and, though this name may come as a surprise to some, William Faulkner.

They have been impressed with the basically unchanging character of human nature throughout the ages. They were never deluded into the notion that science (the "hard sciences" using an objective method for testing hypotheses and capable of making accurate predictions) could deal with ends and goals. Applied science, technology, could indeed provide the most efficient means to reach predetermined goals. But it could not as science select the proper goals. Marxism did not attract such thinkers as these, though in the thirties it did attract to one degree or another most of the other intellectuals.

Consequently, few people of the period were able to see (or are able to see now) the real point that Ransom and his fellow Agrarians were making. The Agrarians never questioned the ability of a technological society to produce goods for the consumer but were much concerned with the bearing of a technological society on the nature of the good life. They asked that we consider what the good life is or ought to be.

This matter is almost completely overlooked. It was assumed that any fool knew what the good life was. He at least knew what he wanted. Give him an abundance of material goods and he was free to choose for himself. The nature of the good life—the importance of a choice of goals and ends—hardly required discussion. Technology had given man the means to secure almost anything he wanted. Such was the unspoken assumption of those who attacked or ignored the Agrarians.

Man at last was coming to control nature. Here again Ransom had something to say. The exploitation of nature implicit in industrialization was disastrous to the good life. Mankind, of course, had to make use of nature. Indeed, had to prey upon nature. A return to Adam's happy life in the Garden of Eden (or that of the happy denizens of the Golden Age of the Greeks) was irrecoverable. Even so, man must indulge in no rape of nature; rather his relation to her should more nearly resemble a

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

marriage involving respect and love. Ransom's own figure was that of a truce: no warfare against nature, no demand for unconditional surrender, rather a reasonable accommodation in which man could live in harmony with nature.

In one sense this was the most important item in the Agrarians' agenda, so deeply embedded in their thinking that they did not give it the prominence that it deserved. They did not, for example, use terms later to become familiar, such as "environmental protection" or "preservation of our natural heritage." Yet had they done so in the 1930s, it would have done little good. Even today, the "dead" lakes of Canada and New England, impure water supplies, and noxious air have not yet brought much vigorous response from the national administration.

A few years later Ransom had ceased from any special agitation for what he and his friends had called Agrarianism. It was a pity that they had so named it, for the name played into the hands of their opponents who jeered at them for not practicing what they preached. Clearly none of them were trudging behind old Beck, the plow mule, down on the farm. (By such logic as this, of course, their opponents would have to be called Industrialists and would have been required to take their places in a factory production line, or more humbly, tuning automobile engines at the local garage.)

Yet, Agrarianism was for Ransom no idea picked up as a kind of fad. It was a proper extension of his thought processes—an application to daily life of his philosophy—his conception of a proper vocation for a large, perhaps the largest, segment of mankind. He gave up prosecution of the case because in spite of his concern for philosophy and what it had to tell us about the satisfactory life, Ransom had a powerful streak of pragmatism in his nature. One test of an idea, and an important one, was whether it could be put to work. By 1945 or perhaps earlier, he had decided that the people would not accept Agrarianism. It had no political future.

In the 1950s or 1960s, I remember that he told me with reference to Agrarianism that the younger men deserved their chance to bring about their own notions of what a society should be. He doubted that those new ideas would result in success and happiness, but they would be put in force nevertheless. This was said with no trace of cynicism, as if he hoped that he would live long enough to see their failure and utter his "I told you so." Ransom was a generous man, and he had something of the calm of the old philosopher who is a bit detached from the fray.

I think, however, that Ransom for a time genuinely believed that the South might be willing to accept Agrarianism as a viable politico-economic program and that the Roosevelt administration might see fit to implement aspects of it. His early contributions to the cause had a quality of real enthusiasm.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

How deeply the championship of Agrarianism was rooted in his thinking is abundantly displayed in a book that also appeared in 1930, his *God Without Thunder: An Unorthodox Defense of Orthodoxy.* Here again the contest described is that between an abstracting rationalism and a loving comprehension of the concrete world as revealed by the senses and warmed by the emotions of the human being. Ransom makes it a contest between science on the one hand and art and religion on the other, but the science that he sees as rapacious and aggressive is not the contemplative science of, say, pure mathematics but the science that can be applied in working technologies. This "science" gives man power over nature and produces in man a dangerous hubris; art and religion on the other hand reflect the total experience of the human being, including an enjoyment of nature, and imply a sense of man's dependence on a powerful and mysterious entity that he must accept with awe but also may love and worship.

The book is full of challenging and often persuasive interpretations of such things as the story of Adam and Eve in the Happy Garden or the story of Cain and Abel or the Greek story of Prometheus, and it certainly gives a convincing account of the dilution of the Christian faith in the twentieth century.

As he had summarized it in a letter to Allen Tate some months before: "Little by little the God of the Jews has been whittled down into a spirit of science, or the spirit of love, or the spirit of Rotary; and now religion is not religion at all, but a purely secular experience. . . ."

What had caused the damage? In this same letter to Tate he writes: "The N[ew] T[estament] has been a backset as a religious myth; not its own fault, as I think but nevertheless a failure: it's hurt us."

Ransom's logic is thus pushed inexorably: any lessening of the mysterious power of an inscrutable God is dangerous for mankind. The claim that man was also a God, however hedged about with reservations, will almost certainly encourage man to believe that mankind can aspire to godhead and that the Ruler of the Universe is after all knowable, not mysterious, and awesome, really a Big Friendly Brother, and probably just the spirit of brotherhood itself. For Ransom, such a view is a misconception, and a dangerous illusion for mankind to hold.

This view seems to leave Ransom with a primary audience of Orthodox Jews and just possibly Moslems. Though Ransom was later to say that his own position was that of a Unitarian, he must have known by 1930 that most American Unitarians were far too "liberal" in their theology to find any appeal at all in what he was saying.

Quite consciously, he was setting forth a program for the American South and for those whom he considered to be his own people. He makes this motive completely clear in his "Epilogue" to *God Without*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Thunder. His logic, he concedes, would recommend that the Western world "Enter the Synagogue, if the Synagogue might be so kind as to receive it." But the notion is impracticable, he believes, for "better or worse, man is a member of his own race or his own tribe. If there is not a religious institution that suits him quite near at home, he will have to go without one." So in turn Ransom has to reject the Greek Orthodox Church, Roman Catholicism, Anglicanism, and finally comes down to Presbyterianism, Methodism, and the Baptists. These last denominations, he writes, are "evidently close to my kind of community," even though he admits that they have tended "to secularize themselves more and more every day."

It is an honest statement in which the speaker faces the hard facts, but it is also a counsel of despair—not only because Ransom is aware of the difficulty of restoring the Protestant denominations to his orthodoxy, but for a far more important reason: because the choice is ultimately made not in virtue of his creed's ultimate truth but because it appeals to the needs of the members of the society in question. In short, human considerations turn out here to be more important than the claim of truth. But the Protestant might answer: This is the very reason I am giving up what you call orthodoxy. What I believe is more congenial to me as a member of a secularized society than are the beliefs of an earlier day.

I simply do not know enough about the personal beliefs of Ransom in his later mature years. The signs that we have would indicate that he believed in a kind of poetic materialism, perhaps not unlike that of George Santayana. He loved nature, and he evidently found in art a way of bringing mankind into a loving enjoyment of it, but he did not make the mistake of turning nature into a kindly and softhearted nurse. In *God Without Thunder,* as we have seen, he comes close to identifying his god with nature itself, which is the source of both joy and sorrow but in which it is unpredictable. In 1929 in a letter to his friend Allen Tate, Ransom wrote: "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; a big beginning, but only a beginning, of which is the love of the Lord. *Substitute nature* for the Lord *and he won't feel aggrieved* [italics mine]."

Landor's famous quatrain applies very well to Ransom himself if we omit the first line with its note of arrogance. Ransom rarely fought with anyone, though not because he felt that his antagonist was not a worthy opponent.

> I fought with none for none was worth my strife.
> Nature I loved and next to nature, art.
> I warmed both hands before the fire of life.
> It sinks and I am ready to depart.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Ransom had enjoyed his life and his last days were serene ones. The third line also applies most specifically to Ransom. He was a man who loved games, everything from golf and tennis to bridge and poker, and he lived in a cheerful happiness that had in it nothing either gross or gloomy. He did love nature and art, but he was no Platonic philosopher king, planning myths and rituals for his less exalted countrymen. He really tried to practice what he preached, attempted to live what he thought was the proper life for others in the community. Though his *God Without Thunder* would seem to most people subversive of his father's faith, he dedicated the book to his father. His ties with his father remained close all his life. He attended Methodist services when his father preached. He even taught a Sunday School class, but it was noticed that when the Apostle's Creed was recited, Ransom did not join in the statement that he believed in "Jesus Christ, His only Son our Lord. . . ." When Ransom was asked why, he said, "Because I do not believe it." He gave up his churchgoing then, but the story is significant: he wanted to save his people and their culture and he would take part as fully as he could in their communal rites, but he had to be an honest man too. One has to acknowledge that at least he made a good try to fulfill his practical obligations as a member of his chosen community, though at the same time he had to honor the claims of intellectual truth as he saw it.

With Ransom's transfer to Kenyon College there was a waning of his interest in Agrarianism and in the religion that he thought was implied by it, a "traditional" religion of the sort described above. I think it wrong to say that Ransom ever "repudiated" Agrarianism, but he was no Don Quixote; he was too much the pragmatist for such a role as the Don's. Ransom still believed that he had been directing his lance against real giants that needed to be overthrown, but, though he was not mad, the bemused public at large could see in his endeavors only a tilting at some quite useful windmills. And since his society could not be talked out of this delusion, those giants were going to continue grinding away. After all, Ransom's efforts had always been in behalf of the society, not at all to show off his intellectual daring and dexterity. He quietly accepted the fact that the society had no intention of letting itself be changed radically. His churchgoing also stopped; a society that was committed to industrialism was happy enough to worship a God deprived of his thunder or to worship no God at all, since man believed that he was doing so well on his own newfound powers.

Though Ransom had for a long time been interested in the arts and particularly in poetry, he now came back to a consideration of the role of literature and the arts with a new emphasis. As the editor of a quarterly magazine, the newly established *Kenyon Review*, and with allies he

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

could count on at *The Southern Review*, myself and Warren, there was an opportunity to present new claims for the importance of the arts. Ransom proposed that the two quarterlies should fire both barrels at once in an assertion of what was needed and thus salute the stirrings of critical thought. The *Kenyon* would publish five articles on this subject, and we at the *Southern* five others. Ransom himself in 1941 published a volume entitled *The New Criticism*.

Unintentionally, as he told me, he gave a name to that loosely defined entity that has come to be called the "new criticism." Readers of the book that bears that title will have noted that Ransom expressed his disagreement with such other "new" critics as Yvor Winters, I. A. Richards, and T. S. Eliot. His purpose was not to give his endorsement to a new product. In fact, he closed his book with a chapter entitled "Wanted: An Ontological Critic." Such a critic had obviously not yet appeared. What did Ransom mean by an ontological critic? It is not easy to say: but obviously the ontological critic had to be concerned with the special and essential character of poetry, not merely with the background or origins of a poem.

When Delmore Schwartz asked Ransom why he didn't attempt to remodel a critic like Blackmur or Brooks to fit the role, Ransom very properly refused to act on the suggestion. He had his own idea of what the proper critic should be, just as he had his own special conception of what poetry is. Nevertheless, he had many handsome things to say about some of his fellow critics, especially his younger friends, and no one could have been kinder to me or more concerned to help promote such a venture as *Understanding Poetry*, the little textbook that Robert Penn Warren and I published in 1938.

Yet the truth is that for all of Ransom's philosophical interest in the nature of poetry as a special kind of verbal discourse, his ultimate concern, I have always been convinced, has been the function of poetry within society. Like Plato he was finally interested in what good, if any, the poet did for the republic, or for the society as a whole. Even Aristotle, who made his definition of tragedy a matter of its possessing a special structure in its presentation of an action, nevertheless added in his concept of catharsis, which had to do with his interest in the effects of poetry on the citizen at large. Ransom had imbibed deeply from the classics when he had read "Greats" at Oxford.

The study of the arts and of poetry, Ransom felt, might help ameliorate the plight of the individual living in a secularized and increasingly industrialized society. It might renew for him some sense of a fullness of the life of the spirit, otherwise denied by his daily life. Literature might give him back at least something of the sort of thing that he sorely needed.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Sheer rationalism turned the world into an abstraction—a set of logical relationships that were enormously valuable for securing the means for living—but the whole man craved a full world, sensuous, concrete, stimulating to the emotions and engaging man's total being. As the world became more and more abstract, we more and more needed art, and great art that would render real life acceptable.

Narcotics, violent stimulants, exciting distractions, such as those given by cheap and superficial art, could provide only temporary escapes from the boredom, the monotony, and the hardships of so much modern life.

This sense of what genuine art could do for society thus deeply influenced Ransom's theory of art. For example, a poem represented a statement of a sort and thus possessed a logic that involved a rational process. But a genuine poem went on to introduce all sorts of items not directly relevant to the "logic" of the poem. They delayed the movement toward the object—they gave glimpses of the real world that we know in its fullness. They turned something as abstract as a road map into something more like an oil painting of a landscape.

Such is my own analogy. Ransom, however, has supplied one of his own. The structure of a poem, which organizes it and represents its logic, corresponds to the path that would lead from where I am to my elected destination. But as I walk along the path, I am induced to stray from it from time to time, to look at a spray of wildflowers that caught my eye, or a small waterfall that has come into view just outside the path, or any other interesting though "irrelevant" item along the way. My walk with its practical concern has become thus a richer and more humanly rewarding experience.

A poem for Ransom, then, has a structure (the logical element) and a texture (sensuous, concrete materials that are irrelevant to that structure). Thus, there is a dualism that Ransom argues must be finally overcome if the poem is not to be reduced to nonsense. Yet the irrelevant material has an importance: it reminds us of a world much richer and more comprehensive than the abstractions to which we so often reduce our experience in order to accomplish a particular task or goal. No wonder Ransom chose as a title for his finest and most eloquent collection of critical essays *The World's Body*. His thesis there is that we must not let that marvelous and wonderful entity be reduced to a diagram. If we are deluded into thinking that by such reductive analysis we can possess it and use it as we please, we shall end up by destroying our own humanity.

Ransom brings religion and poetry very close together. Indeed, they become almost identical. Ransom's position seems to me essentially that of Matthew Arnold—granted the vast differences in their approach to the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

problem and the differences in the tone of their writings. (Yet the index to Daniel Young's life of Ransom has not a single reference to Arnold. Perhaps I do overestimate that likeness.)

For me, and I believe for others, the difficulty with Ransom's account of poetry lies in its basic dualism. The distinction between structure and texture seems very like the age-old split between content and form, a split which implies that metaphor, diction, rhythm, stanza form, and such other devices have only a "decorative" function, whereas clearly they can affect powerfully any ideational content, changing "what the poem really says." Indeed, as I. A. Richards reminded us some sixty years ago, if you change the way something is said, you have changed to some degree what it says. To take an extreme case: "That was a fine thing to do" can change its meaning from high commendation to withering disapproval, depending upon the tone of voice in which it is uttered. Good poets have the means to control the tone even when they are not present to read the poem in their own voices. Furthermore, if the concrete particulars ought to be irrelevant to the logic of the poem as a whole, are they more effective in proportion to their irrelevancy? What is the optimum irrelevance? The examination of any actual poem will show that there are vast differences between the degrees of irrelevance of the concrete items (the texture) to the thrust (logical structure) of the poem. Thus, Donne's celebrated comparison of the souls of a pair of lovers to the legs of a geometer's compass gets a high mark in the irrelevance scale, but most readers (and not merely modern readers) have found it a very effective way of bringing the poem to a satisfying close. But one can find many figures in Abraham Cowley's poetry that are on an absolute scale no more irrelevant than Donne's comparison and yet are felt to be absurd and ridiculous. I shall cite here one of Cowley's less absurd comparisons. The following stanza is from his *Hymn to Light*.

> First-born of Chaos, who so fair didst come
> From the old Negro's darksome womb!
> Which, when it saw the lovely child,
> The melancholy mask put on kind looks and smiled . . .

Or to come at matters from the other direction: why is Wordsworth's comparison of a young girl to the beauty of a star "When only one / Is shining in the sky" so much more effective than that well-worn comparison "Her eyes were like stars"? Stars are stars, and it is hard to see why one star is more completely relevant (or irrelevant) than two stars. I can't think that the matter is so simple that it turns upon the fact that a whole girl is less like a star and therefore more irrelevant than that the girl's two

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

eyes are more like a pair of stars and therefore more nearly relevant. Wordsworth's comparison actually draws on the whole context of the poem and helps make the point of the poem: the girl in question, though unknown to the world at large and one who would be as little noticed by a passerby as "a violet by a mossy stone," is for the man who speaks the poem the only star in his firmament, not like Milton's beauty the "Cynosure" of all eyes, but surely for this speaker, his only true North Star, or better still—since the planet of love, Venus, is the first star in the sky in the evening, and for a while the only star that shines there—the star of love.

In short, the simile that Wordsworth uses is an important element in what the voice in the poem is saying: it helps define precisely what is being said and is actually highly relevant to the poem. It is not a truly irrelevant element.

What seems to me most worth saying in this general connection is that the structure-texture thesis will not account for Ransom's own poetry. He is indeed a very fine poet. The note that runs all through his poetry is a defense of a concrete and mysterious world in which all of us have been born and not an abstract and limited world that man can put to his own use. But there are many variations on the theme and many quiet lyrics that are only peripheral to this theme of cultural crisis: a child confronted for the first time with the fact of death; the deep love for one's native land, not lessened or deepened because of the unmistakable signs of its decline; a circumstance in which physical pain and mental anguish are weighed one against the other and the one used to buffer the other; the charming but, nevertheless, foolish confidence of youth. Many of these are "simple" poems, the matter of every day; but seen as cameo presentations of the universal human predicament, they take on power. No wonder that Thomas Hardy was one of Ransom's favorite poets; and Ransom's poems are just as intensely out of the "upper South" as are Hardy's poems out of his Wessex.

Yet the details of these poems of Ransom's are so completely relevant to the import of the poems that without them the poems would be so abstract as to be almost meaningless. Consider one of Ransom's best-known lyrics, "Bells for John Whiteside's Daughter." Little girls die unexpectedly every day, and because they seem so full of life their sudden death will seem especially desolating: but in this poem sudden death seems particularly desolating, for in this poem a generalization, an actuarial statistic, suddenly becomes alive and catches our attention and engages our feelings intensely. Yet the emotion evoked is not irresponsible; it is quietly measured to the occasion.

How is it done? Well, no one can fully explain the magic of a truly fine poem, but one can hope to call attention to some obviously salient

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

points. There is the presence of the geese in the poem. The poem has only twenty lines all told, but nine of them have to do with the child's chasing the geese from the shade of the apple trees to the pond. The geese are "lazy," "sleepy, and proud." They cry out in their own "goose" language, of course, "Alas," but under the rod of the "little Lady," they "scuttle" away to the pond.

As the geese are described here in the poem they are creatures out of a child's fairy-tale world, sufficiently like human beings to take on the qualities of old, rather stuffy human beings, but they are recognizably geese, in their language and in the way they clumsily move about.

> Tricking and stopping, sleepy and proud

and later as I have already remarked, they

> scuttle
> Goose-fashion under the skies.

I don't know what "tricking" would mean here. The poet has exercised his liberty as a poet: for the *Oxford English Dictionary* knows it not in any sense that would fit a particular kind of perambulation. Maybe Ransom means that the geese keep deceiving the viewer's expectation, seeming to start one way, then stopping, and going another. Anyway, most of us, if we follow the child's perceptions as she "harries" the confused geese, do accept the word.

Are all the details about the geese irrelevant to the poem? I don't think so. This passage brings to life the earlier statement in the poem about the "speed in her little body," and the "lightness in her footfall." It helps explain why (in the first stanza) we are told that

> It is no wonder her brown study
> Astonishes us all.

Moreover, the episode in which we watch her "tireless heart" in its play also unobtrusively makes another point: she has now, indeed, moved from a world of play and fancy into the studious concentration of the typical philosopher—little girls do not characteristically fall into "brown studies." The little girl is also moved out of childhood's world of talking beasts and into a world of stern reality. In the last stanza, the poet comments once again on her "brown study," as she lies there "so primly propped."

Wordsworth in one of his best-known poems addresses the child as "Thou, best philosopher," and we know from the context in what sense

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

he meant it. Ransom's poem barely hints at the association. Even so, the child in her "brown study" has something to tell us about our destiny as human beings or at least is able to make a point that we already know all too well: Death is no respecter of persons. Death makes no promises as to how long we are allowed to live.

Though I don't want to worry the point of relevance or irrelevancy, I do hope that I have shown why I hesitate to accept Ransom's structure-texture account. In this poem, as so often, what Ransom has dubbed "irrelevant" seems to be doing all the really important work in the poem. We may summarize the meaning of the poem in a prose paraphrase, and such a paraphrase may have its uses in any shorthand description of a poem, but no paraphrase, however carefully made, can be a substitute for what the poem essentially is. I would prefer to say that the real poem is not so much a "logical structure" as a "dramatic rendition" of a total experience. That such experiences are organized for us by a good poet, novelist, or dramatist, I would cheerfully accept. They do not give us simply a jumble of detail, even though a poem like *The Waste Land* seemed such to some of its earliest readers. But how useful is it to describe the organization of a poem as logical when its essential unity seems to be the coherence of a dramatic experience or that of a well-told tale? For the poem (or novel or drama) cannot be reduced to a logical statement or statements without the loss of its very substance. In fact, Ransom in his *Selected Poems* (1963) writes: "Poetry is still the supremely inclusive speech which escapes, as if unaware of them, the strictures and reductions of the systematic logical understanding." This seems to be a much more accurate statement of the case, and I would like to think that it was Ransom's final revision of his structure-texture account.

Yet any difficulties with his account of the makeup of a poem that I have had in the past do not compromise my experience of the poems he writes. Let the master call his metaphor, his daring uses of diction, his subacid ironies, and his general handling of tone—let him reckon them all as irrelevancies if he likes to think of them so. I find that they actually render his poems brilliant evocations of a mood or make a striking observation or more often constitute a rich and persuasive commentary on human life. Moreover, when they do become something like a pronouncement, the material that determines the voice of the speaker converts it from what might be the glibness of the daily columnist or the harangue of the backwoods prophet or the complaints of the newspaper contributor to a measured utterance of dignity, maturity, and wisdom. Control of tone through various rhetorical devices provides the credentials that imply that the speaker possesses experience, some knowledge of the world in which we live, a proper sense of humor, and no inflated sense of his own worth.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

One hears that voice over and over in Ransom's poems. Often it is tinged with irony, sometimes with a rueful self-knowledge, but rarely, if ever, with an arrogant confidence in the rightness of what he says. The range of subjects and occasions is large. The incident may be a trivial lover's quarrel between two adolescents, but not trivial for *them* ("Parting, Without a Sequel"). It can be a wounding and bitter outbreak between a married pair ("Two in August"). I have been told that the pair involved in this poem are two cats, male and female; and the poem is, detail by detail, entirely susceptible of that interpretation. Yet knowing this leaves the poem nevertheless a highly interesting and even poignant commentary on troubled human relationships.

In "Blue Girls" the speaker watches girls "twirling their blue skirts" on the grounds of a girls' college or finishing school. They are absorbed with their looks, their growing up into womanhood, and bored with their classroom exercises. The poem has been described as a bitter commentary, but it is nothing of the kind. The young women are not wicked, but young and thoroughly human and, of course, occupied with matters close to their own affairs; and their beauty is *fragile.* The observer is not censorious but feels the poignance of their pride and hopefulness. He is not being sarcastic, therefore, when he says (but, of course, not audibly to them)

> Practise your beauty, blue girls, before it fail;
> And I will cry with my loud lips and publish
> Beauty which all our power shall never establish
> It is so frail.

The poem ends with a continuation of what he could tell these delightful young creatures. He could tell them something of one of their teachers, known to them as a

> lady with a terrible tongue,
> Blue eyes fallen from blue. . . .

who was once

> lovelier than any of you.

Ransom is a realistic poet, an ironic poet. But far from being immune to beauty or the attractiveness of the world of the senses, he is able to capture the power and attraction of the world often almost magically. He does so in retelling the story of Judith of Bethulia, who when her city was besieged by the Assyrian king, Holofernes, volunteered to make her way outside the city to his tent, to get him drunk and kill him. She does

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

so and brings back the conqueror's head to prove that she has finished him off. The next day the Jews attack their now-demoralized enemies and destroy them utterly.

A Hebrew elder is imagined to be speaking the poem. He says:

> Beautiful as the flying legend of some leopard,
> She had not yet chosen her great captain or prince. . . .
> And a wandering beauty is a blade out of its scabbard. . . .
>
> Nor by process of veiling she grew the less fabulous.
> Grey or blue veils, we were desperate to study
> The invincible emanations of her white body. . . .

The poem ends with Holofernes dead but the Hebrew elders still have their worries.

> May God send unto our virtuous lady her prince.
> It is stated she went reluctant to that orgy,
> Yet a madness fevers our young men, and not the clergy
> Nor the elders have turned them unto modesty since.
> Inflamed by the thought of her naked beauty, with desire?
> Yes, and chilled with fear and despair.

Ransom can produce a withering satire, though he ordinarily uses the more gentle modes of irony. In "Three Mountebanks," however, he takes as his targets three Southern hot-gospellers. As the son of a Methodist parson, Ransom doubtless knew what his father thought of that breed. I know what my father thought of them. Yet even here, there is no realistic surface. He distances them somewhat. The first of these Mountebanks vaunts the merits of Fides, his hound of faith; the second, those of Humphrey, his elephant of patience; and the third, of Agnes, his lamb who demands everywhere to be sacrificed. The evangelical rhetoric is brilliantly caricatured.

A few of Ransom's poems deal rather directly with the crisis in culture, the confusion entailed by the loss of the old faith and its verities. "Man Without Sense of Direction" and "Persistent Explorer" are two such poems. The former describes a man "Who cannot fathom nor perform his nature."

> And he writhes like an antique man of bronze
> That is beaten by furies visible,
> Yet he is punished not knowing his sins. . . .

His problem is essentially that of J. Alfred Prufrock or one of Eliot's Hollow Men and springs from the same source, but the poem is not in

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the least like Eliot's, and I am not sure that Ransom was aware of any likeness.

Ransom's "Persistent Explorer" puts the cause of the Explorer's problems rather boldly. In his explorations he has come upon a mighty cataract. The ancient Greeks would have recognized it as a sacred spot. For such a Homeric Greek a goddess would have provided a theophany as she did to a mountain shepherd of that time. But no supernatural vision occurs to the modern explorer. As Ransom puts it

> The cloud was, but the goddess was not there.

For him

> It was water, only water, tons of it
> Dropping into the gorge, and every bit
> Was water—the insipid chemical H_2O. . . .
>
> Furious the spectacle
> But it spelled nothing, there was not any spell
> Bidding him whether cower or rejoice.

Science as such is dispassionately neutral. One can build neither ethics nor aesthetics on it and certainly not a religion.

Yet the joke—if it is on anyone—is on the Explorer himself. And so

> no unreasonable outcry
> The pilgrim made; only a rueful grin
> Spread over his lips until he drew them in;
> He did not sit upon a rock and die.

He refuses to give himself up to romantic despair. He will keep up his exploration. He will seek to find a country of the mind in which the human being can discover a more satisfactory habitation. Such was indeed the course that Ransom took during the rest of his life, but primarily in his discussions of literature as a special kind of activity that enjoyed a privileged status in relation to mankind's other activities and that served a very important function in the total human economy.

Prose, written in a characteristically graceful and persuasive style, was the principal medium for these lucubrations and speculations. Ransom's days as a poet were pretty well over with the publication of the collection entitled *Two Gentlemen in Bonds* early in 1927. He wrote very few poems afterward.

After 1934, Ransom wrote only one more poem, "Address to the Scholars of New England," in 1939. But he continued to revise his

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

poems, and in his last collection in 1974 he rewrites eight of them, printing the new version side-by-side with the original poem and adding comments in which he explains the reasons for the revisions he makes. That he should have done so is a very interesting phenomenon, particularly since most of Ransom's friends—I think I'm correct in saying this—preferred the earlier versions. I think that the older philosopher tended to take over from the brilliant younger poet and that the logic of the argument officially dismissed what the muse had originally offered through inspiration. The reader, of course, will have to decide for himself. In any case, no harm has been done. If the revisions improve the poems, so be it; if not, the originals exist, and for those, like me, who usually prefer the original versions, a comparison with the altered version at least serves to call attention to certain felicities of word or metaphor or rhythmical device which contributed to the magical effect that we treasure.

We have had no other poet quite like Ransom in English, and we are not likely to have one in the future. He was an original, and he came from a special culture that may well be disappearing. He was thoroughly Southern, though he does not fit any accepted Southern stereotype. In his manner, however, he did, and *Time* magazine, for example, always referred to him as "courtly." The courtliness owed nothing to a landed aristocracy. The truth is that courteous manners were widely disseminated in the South and were the everyday habits of people of modest means. Ransom's middle Tennessee had never had a plantation economy. It was a "furnishing" state for the lower South, growing wheat, tobacco, and corn and breeding horses, mules, and cattle for export to the lower South, which was heavily committed to cotton culture.

Ransom, himself, was also basically evangelical in religious matters but firmly committed to learning. The Methodists set up colleges everywhere: Vanderbilt, Duke, and Emory, for example, all began as Methodist foundations. The classics were still regarded as essential to a sound education, and in Ransom's day Tennessee was dotted with small classical academies where Latin and often Greek were taught as a matter of course. When Ransom went to Oxford, he had already had a provincial version of what the Oxford students had had at the great English "public" schools like Eton and Winchester.

It has been said that Ransom's speech had been slightly Anglicized. This is nonsense. He did use the British pronunciation of a few special words, such as "decadent." But his dropping of the final consonant "r" or his suppression of it in words like *arm*, *forth*, and *sort*, he took to England with him. They are or were until lately a regular feature of the Southern lowland dialect. Ransom and I had got them with our mother's milk.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Yet Oxford did have a great influence on Ransom, and though he never aped English forms and manners, his mind was in great part formed by his Oxford education, and he came to admire English civilization—not that of London but of Thomas Hardy's Wessex, where man and nature had come to an agreeable accommodation with each other and the life and the rituals of the people of the west country showed as much. I had heard Ransom talk about the matter in one of his classes and was much impressed by what he had to say.

Ransom also had inherited from his family and his regional culture a solid moral base. Though he was careful not to don the robes of the moralist, he had very firm notions of what was good and what was evil and was, on certain matters, almost squeamish—or at least so it would have seemed to the present-day world. Such was the case in spite of his complete emancipation from orthodox Christianity. He looked with gentleness and kindliness on the positions taken by such friends of his as Allen Tate and myself and was the close and intimate friend at Kenyon of Charles Coffin, a committed Anglican. But for him Christianity was at best simply a great myth that had been useful to mankind in the past but was of very limited utility today.

How may one sum up this highly talented and brilliantly accomplished man, on one level so apparently simple and straightforward and yet at the same time so complicated in his learning and in his theoretical interests? Another contradiction: on one level he impressed one as the pure thinker, detached and remote, in argument referring this matter to what Plato had said in "the Sophist" and to, on another point, what Kant had settled forever in his "Critique of Practical Judgement." Yet, on another level, Ransom clearly wanted to see his ideas put into action: his schemes for a proper economic basis for a good society in the South; his notions of what could be done with the Christian church in our present society; his eagerness to get "Criticism, Inc." at work in our universities so that the great virtues of literature could be made available to society—all of these were matters in which Ransom was deeply concerned. He was certainly no idle dreamer; he was not even the detached seer whose job was to solve problems and leave the application of them, and even the dissemination of them, to others to work out.

I have never come to a real understanding of his character and personality, and I now do not expect to do so. But I can offer my tribute to an extraordinary man who did so much for me, and for other people like me, through his example as a genuine man of letters and through his direct encouragement. I was only one of many who owe him a great debt. Not the least of his gifts to me was to jolt me out of my jejune romanticism and to open my eyes to the world of reality.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Srinivasa Ramanujan

BRUCE C. BERNDT

THE ACADEMIC LINEAGE of most noted scholars can be traced through famous centers of learning, inspiring and learned teachers, and invigorating intellectual climates fostering curiosity and inquiry. Srinivasa Ramanujan, the greatest of all Indian mathematicians, had none of these advantages. He had but one year of education in a small college, was largely self-taught, and worked most of his short life of thirty-two years in isolation, with little contact with other mathematicians. No other known mathematician of comparable talent had so many obstacles blocking his path.

Ramanujan's father worked for twenty rupees a month as a clerk for a cloth merchant in the southern Indian town of Kumbakonam. Ramanujan's mother was a strong-willed, intelligent woman, the daughter of a court official in Erode. For some time after their marriage, they had no children, and so her father prayed to Goddess Namagiri that his daughter would be blessed with children. Shortly thereafter, Ramanujan was born on December 22, 1887, in Erode in the home of his maternal grandparents, which was the custom at that time. After a few months, his mother brought him home to Kumbakonam. (Erode is approximately 120 miles west of Kumbakonam.) Because the family was very poor, Ramanujan's mother augmented the family income by keeping student boarders from the local high school and government college. The Ramanujan home had essentially one room that was flanked by a very small kitchen at the back and a small storage room in the front. When I visited the home in early 1984, the only visible sign that this was once the home of the most famous scientific figure in Indian history was a picture of Ramanujan cut from a newspaper and taped above the home's entrance. Kumbakonam lies approximately 160 miles south-southwest of Madras and had a population of approximately 53,000 at the time of Ramanujan's birth. With a population today of more than 150,000, Kumbakonam is famous for its beautiful temples. As one stands facing the front of Ramanujan's home, the most magnificent of all of these temples, Sarangapani Temple, rises at the left only two blocks away.

✪ BRUCE C. BERNDT is professor of mathematics at the University of Illinois in Urbana-Champaign. For the past twelve years he has devoted all his research efforts to providing proofs for the claims in Ramanujan's notebooks.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

As a youngster, Ramanujan had difficulty with speech, was very shy and was stricken with smallpox. In school, Ramanujan invariably was first in class examinations. Books on English literature were frequently the prizes he won. Ramanujan once won a collection of William Wordsworth's poetry for his proficiency in mathematics. At the age of twelve, he borrowed from an older student S. L. Loney's *Plane Trigonometry* and worked every problem in the book. Of course, it is noteworthy indeed that a twelve-year-old boy could master trigonometry by himself with no help. However, the book contained even much more—namely, many topics from calculus and, in particular, infinite series. Published in Cambridge in 1894, Loney's textbook was popular for many years at southern Indian colleges.

Ramanujan began his single-minded devotion to mathematics when he borrowed Carr's *Synopsis of Elementary Results in Pure Mathematics* from the local government college library. Carr was a tutor at Cambridge and compiled his book of about five thousand theorems, with few proofs, as an aid in his tutoring. This unusual treatise served as the basis for much of Ramanujan's knowledge about mathematics. Shortly thereafter, Ramanujan took the matriculation exam for the University of Madras and obtained a first-class place. At age sixteen, he entered the government college at Kumbakonam. By then, Ramanujan was totally absorbed with mathematics and would not study any other subject. He therefore failed to pass such courses as English and physiology at the end of his first year and so was not permitted to return. Two years later he entered Pachaiyappa College in Madras, but once again he failed his exams at the end of the academic year because he would not study any subject except mathematics.

Thus, from about 1903 to 1910, working in isolation, Ramanujan devoted all of his efforts to mathematics. Paper was costly for him, so he worked on a slate, which was common for students in those days. Ramanujan then would record his final results without proofs in notebooks.

Ramanujan married S. Janaki in 1909 and was compelled to seek employment. In 1910 he obtained a meeting with V. R. Aiyar, the founder of the Indian Mathematical Society. At that time, Aiyar was a deputy collector in the Madras Civil Service, and Ramanujan asked him for a position as a clerk in his office. (In those days, when one achieved academic fame, doors were opened to higher paying government positions.) Upon examining the theorems in Ramanujan's notebooks, V. R. Aiyar decided that Ramanujan's talents would be wasted in a clerk's position and so consulted P. V. Seshu Aiyar, Ramanujan's college teacher in Kumbakonam. They then sent Ramanujan to R. Ramachandra Rao, a wealthy mathematician and collector in the town of Nellore, about eighty miles north of Madras. Rao's

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

interview with Ramanujan is best described in his own words:

> And in the plenitude of my mathematical wisdom, I condescended to permit Ramanujan to walk into my presence. A short uncouth figure, stout, unshaved, not overclean, with one conspicuous feature—shining eyes—walked in with a frayed notebook under his arm. He was miserably poor. He had run away from Kumbakonam to get leisure in Madras to pursue his studies. He never craved for any distinction. He wanted leisure; in other words, that simple food should be provided for him without exertion on his part and that he should be allowed to dream on.
>
> He opened his book and began to explain some of his discoveries. I saw quite at once that there was something out of the way; but my knowledge did not permit me to judge whether he talked sense or nonsense. Suspending judgment, I asked him to come over again, and he did. And then he had gauged my ignorance and showed me some of his simpler results.

R. Ramachandra Rao gave Ramanujan a monthly stipend so that Ramanujan could continue doing his mathematics without worrying about the source of his next meal. But Ramanujan felt uneasy about receiving money without working for it.

Seeking employment once again, Ramanujan obtained on February 9, 1912, a job as clerk in the Madras Port Trust Office. Ramanujan's widow recently related to me that her husband would work at mathematics from the time he finished work at the office until about six o'clock the following morning. After sleeping for two or three hours, he would leave for the office. Working for the Madras Port Trust, however, was to be a watershed in Ramanujan's life. The manager of the Madras Port Trust Office was a mathematician, S. N. Aiyar, and the chairman of the Madras Port Trust was an influential English engineer named Sir Francis Spring. (Aiyar is a name given to a certain class of Brahmins; none of the three Aiyars mentioned in this article is related to another.) Both S. N. Aiyar and Sir Francis Spring took a kindly interest in Ramanujan and encouraged him to write English mathematicians about some of his mathematical discoveries.

On January 16, 1913, Ramanujan wrote the famous Cambridge mathematician G. H. Hardy, who was not the first English mathematician to be informed of Ramanujan's work, but who was the first to recognize Ramanujan's greatness. Below is the first paragraph of this ultimately famous letter:

> Dear Sir,
>
> I beg to introduce myself to you as a clerk in the Accounts Department of the Port Trust Office at Madras on a salary of only 20 pounds per annum. I am now about 23 years of age. [In fact, he was 25.] I have had no University education but I have undergone the ordinary school course. After leaving school I have been employing the spare time at my disposal to work at Mathematics. I have not

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

trodden through the conventional regular course which is followed in a University course, but I am striking out a new path for myself. I have made a special investigation of divergent series in general and the results I get are termed by the local mathematicians as "startling."

The letter, which further contained the statements of more than one hundred theorems, was first dismissed by Hardy as the work of a "crank." That same evening, however, Hardy and J. E. Littlewood, his close friend and collaborator, scrutinized the letter in detail after their dinner at Trinity College, Cambridge. They concluded that Ramanujan's work was that of a genius. Some of the letter's contents were known to them, some of the statements were actually incorrect, but many of the claims were probably true, although they could not prove them. About some of the latter results, Hardy later said:

I had never seen anything in the least like them before. A single look at them is enough to show that they could only be written down by a mathematician of the highest class. They must be true because, if they were not true, no one would have had the imagination to invent them. Finally (you must remember that I knew nothing whatever about Ramanujan, and had to think of every possibility), the writer must be completely honest, because great mathematicians are commoner than thieves or humbugs of such incredible skill.

Hardy immediately replied with a strong invitation to Ramanujan to visit Cambridge so that his mathematical talents might come to full fruition. Ramanujan responded to Hardy's letter by writing that he had "found a friend in you who views my labours sympathetically." But, nonetheless, Ramanujan was quite reluctant to travel to England. By traveling overseas, Brahmins break caste rules. As a consequence, for example, they would not be allowed to attend Brahmin weddings or funerals. Ramanujan's mother was adamantly opposed to her son's leaving India. Furthermore, on May 1, 1913, Ramanujan was awarded a special scholarship by the University of Madras. This enabled him to devote all of his time to the pursuit of mathematics without going to England.

At the beginning of 1914, the Cambridge mathematician E. H. Neville sailed to India to teach in the winter quarter at the University of Madras. Part of Neville's mission was to persuade Ramanujan to come to England. During this period, Ramanujan's mother had a dream in which she saw her son surrounded by famous Europeans. Goddess Namagiri then gave her the command to allow her son to go to England. Thus, on March 17, 1914, Ramanujan boarded a ship and sailed to England.

Most of the Cambridge mathematicians were serving their country in World War I. Hardy, however, as an ardent pacifist had remained in Cambridge. He and Ramanujan discussed mathematics daily and jointly

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

wrote some monumental papers in the theory of numbers. During Ramanujan's first three years at Cambridge, he gained worldwide fame for his mathematical findings. Three of Ramanujan's most important papers, two of them with Hardy, can, I think, be briefly described.

In 1916, Ramanujan published a paper in which he introduced what is now called the Ramanujan tau function. Ramanujan conjectured a remarkable inequality for this function. For almost sixty years, this conjecture was considered to be one of the most important open problems in number theory. Finally, in 1975, the Belgian mathematician P. Deligne proved the conjecture and subsequently was awarded a Fields Medal. (There are no Nobel Prizes in mathematics, and a Fields Medal is considered by mathematicians to be the equivalent in prestige of a Nobel Prize.)

In 1917, Hardy and Ramanujan wrote a paper on the average number of prime factors of a positive integer. (A prime number is an integer that has one and itself as its only divisors. Thus, 2, 3, 5, 7, and 11 are the first five primes.) Ramanujan's paper gave rise to the birth of a new area of mathematics called probabilistic number theory, which today is still expanding and flourishing.

Let $p(n)$ denote the number of partitions of the positive integer n—that is, the number of ways n can be written as a sum of positive integral summands. For example, $p(4)=5$, because there are five ways to write 4—namely, 4, 3 + 1, 2 + 2, 2 + 1 + 1, and 1 + 1 + 1 + 1. Hardy and Ramanujan, in a paper published in 1918, determined the behavior of $p(n)$ as n becomes very large. Before this time, no one else had conjectured that such a description of $p(n)$ would even be possible. In fact, Ramanujan formed the basis for this conjecture several years earlier while still in India. In this famous paper, Hardy and Ramanujan introduced what is now called the "circle method," which is one of the most important and powerful methods used today in the analytic theory of numbers. Partitions are not only very important in mathematics, but they have significant applications in other areas, such as communications and modern physics.

Unfortunately, after three years in England, Ramanujan contracted an incurable illness. It was frequently diagnosed as tuberculosis, but it appears that Ramanujan's illness might have arisen from a poor diet. Ramanujan was a strict vegetarian who cooked for himself while in England. Because of the war, he encountered difficulty in obtaining his customary food from India. Ramanujan also would frequently work for long stretches without eating and sleeping properly. For two years during his stay in England, Ramanujan was confined to at least five different nursing homes and sanitaria.

While confined to a nursing home in Putney, Ramanujan was visited

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

by Hardy one day. Upon entering the room, Hardy said, "I rode here today in taxicab number 1729. This seems to be a dull number, and I hope it is not an unfavorable omen." Ramanujan immediately replied, "No, it is a very interesting number; it is the smallest number expressible as a sum of two cubes in two different ways." In fact,

$$1729 = 9^3 + 10^3 = 1^3 + 12^3.$$

This charming incident demonstrates Ramanujan's great love for numbers and their properties. It should be emphasized, however, that Ramanujan did not deduce these two representations for 1729 in an immediate flash of insight. He had recorded them in his notebooks while in India. Many people have told this story to falsely promulgate mystical elements in Ramanujan's thinking.

Finally the seas were considered safe for travel, and on February 27, 1919, Ramanujan returned to India. Ramanujan's widow, S. Janaki, told me in 1984 that, upon returning home, her husband's first words to her were, "If I had taken you with me, I would not have become ill." He thus admitted that he thought his illness originated with his poor eating habits. Ramanujan remained optimistic that he would recover. Shortly after returning to India, he was offered a professorship at Banaras Hindu University. He responded by saying that he was currently too ill to assume the position, but that he would be happy to accept the offer when his health returned. Unfortunately, his optimism, the better food, and the warm climate did not abate his illness. Nonetheless, he continued to do mathematics while lying on his bed until April 22, 1920, when his pain became too great. Four days later, Ramanujan died at the age of thirty-two.

Ramanujan left behind three notebooks containing the statements of approximately three thousand theorems, without proofs, that he compiled during the years 1903–1914. Hardy strongly urged that these notebooks be edited. By the word *edit*, Hardy meant that if a result in Ramanujan's notebooks is known, it suffices to cite sources where proofs may be found, while if a result is not known, it is incumbent to prove it. Ramanujan's *Collected Papers*, thirty-seven in number, were published in 1927, and it was hoped that his notebooks would be simultaneously published. But the financial condition of the London Mathematical Society was not strong at that time, and so Ramanujan's notebooks were not published. Two English mathematicians, B. M. Wilson and G. N. Watson, began systematically to edit the notebooks in 1929. Unfortunately, Wilson died prematurely in 1935 at the age of thirty-eight, while Watson devoted his efforts to this task until about 1940, when his interest waned. In fact, Watson wrote around twenty-five papers based on

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Ramanujan's work. It was not until 1957, when the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research in Bombay published a photostat edition of the notebooks, that they became available to the general mathematical public. With the help of Watson and Wilson's notes, fortunately preserved in the library at Trinity College, Cambridge, I have devoted all of my efforts since 1977 to editing Ramanujan's notebooks.

Watson died in 1965. Shortly thereafter, J. M. Whittaker paid a visit to Mrs. Watson. (J. M. Whittaker is the son of E. T. Whittaker, who with Watson wrote perhaps the most widely used text on analysis in this century.) Several years later, Whittaker described his visit in a letter to G. E. Andrews of Pennsylvania State University:

> When the Royal Society asked me to write G. N. Watson's obituary memoir I wrote to his widow to ask if I could examine his papers. She kindly invited me to lunch and afterwards his son took me upstairs to see them. They covered the floor of a fair sized room to a depth of about a foot, all jumbled together, and were to be incinerated in a few days. One could only make lucky dips and, as Watson never threw away anything, the result might be a sheet of mathematics but more probably a receipted bill or a draft of his income tax return for 1923. By an extraordinary stroke of luck one of my dips brought up the Ramanujan material which Hardy must have passed on to him when he proposed to edit the earlier notebooks.

R. A. Rankin, from the University of Glasgow, on a later visit with Mrs. Watson, suggested that she donate her husband's papers to Trinity College, Cambridge. The papers included the aforementioned notes that Watson and Wilson compiled in their efforts to edit Ramanujan's notebooks as well as the sheaf of papers unearthed by Whittaker. These papers of Ramanujan were forgotten until 1976, when Andrews rediscovered them while examining Watson's papers at Trinity College. Since that time this set of papers has been called Ramanujan's "lost notebook." The discovery of this "lost notebook" caused roughly as much stir in the mathematical world as the discovery of Beethoven's tenth symphony would cause in the musical world. It is quite clear that the "lost notebook" was written during the last year of Ramanujan's life and represents possibly his deepest work. Thus, even though he worked in great pain, with his physical strength ebbing away, Ramanujan's creativity did not diminish but rather gained in strengh. On the hundredth anniversary of Ramanujan's birth, December 22, 1987, Narosa Publishing House in India published the "lost notebook." In an impressive centenary celebration in Madras, Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi signed the first copy and presented it to Mrs. Ramanujan.

In addition to thirty-seven published papers, the three notebooks, and the "lost notebook," Ramanujan left other unpublished manuscripts at his death. Despite the efforts of several mathematicians, many of the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

results in Ramanujan's manuscripts and notebooks have resisted attempts to prove them.

S. Janaki told me in 1984 that, when her husband returned from England in 1919, he brought with him a large trunk brimming with papers. Furthermore, during Ramanujan's last year, he continued to do mathematics while depositing his papers in a large leather trunk beneath his bed. S. Janaki further related that, while she was at her husband's funeral, his college teacher at Kumbakonam, P. V. Seshu Aiyar, came and removed all of Ramanujan's papers from her home. Supposedly, the University of Madras became the repository for all of Ramanujan's papers. What happened to the two trunks of papers? Did the university lose some of Ramanujan's papers? What we do know is that the University of Madras lost Ramanujan's Quarterly Reports, written while Ramanujan held a scholarship at the University of Madras.

To most of the mathematical world, Ramanujan is known as a number theorist. Most of the papers that Ramanujan published while in England are in number theory, which was also Hardy's primary interest during the period of Ramanujan's stay at Cambridge. However, most of the contents of Ramanujan's notebooks fall into the area of classical analysis; calculus is beginning analysis. The word *classical* indicates that this analysis lies in the spirit of eighteenth and nineteenth century analysis. Much of Ramanujan's work in classical analysis has close ties with number theory or combinatorics, which can be loosely described as "sophisticated counting."

Within analysis, Ramanujan was most fond of infinite series. Most of the formulas in Ramanujan's notebooks involve infinite series. Several of Ramanujan's deepest results about infinite series concern asymptotic series: these are series that generally do not converge but that often are very useful in describing the behavior of certain functions. The majority of series in the "lost notebook" are called q-series, and many of Ramanujan's claims in this area have yet to be proved because of their profound depth and difficulty. Hardy thought that in the history of mathematics only Leonhard Euler and Karl Gustav Jacobi were possibly equal in ability to Ramanujan in the area of infinite series.

Integrals are also at the core of analysis. Despite Ramanujan's unfamiliarity with a primary tool for evaluating definite integrals, Cauchy's residue theorem, his expertise in evaluating integrals was almost unequaled. Even more impressive was his ability in determining the values of integrals that no one had previously considered. Some of these integrals now have his name attached to them.

Ramanujan's published papers contain only one continued fraction, the famous Rogers-Ramanujan continued fraction. This, as the name indicates, was actually first discovered by the English mathematician

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

L. J. Rogers, but was forgotten until Ramanujan rediscovered it. Nonetheless, in evaluating continued fractions and in expanding functions in continued fractions, no one in the history of mathematics is Ramanujan's equal. Ramanujan contributed many problems on continued fractions to the *Journal of the Indian Mathematical Society*; his letters to Hardy also offer several continued fractions, and his notebooks contain about two hundred results on continued fractions.

The field of elliptic functions was prominent in nineteenth-century analysis. Ramanujan rediscovered and independently developed much of the theory while discovering a host of new results as well, especially in the area of modular equations.

Since Ramanujan's college education spanned but one year, he did not have a firm grasp of what constitutes a rigorous proof. Ramanujan's notebooks and unpublished papers, as I have noted, provide only a few scattered proofs. Even his published papers contain several unverified statements. In certain instances, mathematicians can ascertain his arguments, and frequently they are not rigorous. Ramanujan would often employ various techniques and procedures that needed to be justified. In other words, some applications are valid, and others are not; but, despite the shortcomings of his proofs, Ramanujan very seldom committed serious errors. He had an uncanny ability to determine when his methods produced correct results and when they did not.

Because Ramanujan's reasoning and arguments have in many cases been lost, certain biographers have ascribed mystical and religious origins to Ramanujan's thinking. Quite possibly, Ramanujan thought that Goddess Namagiri inspired him in his dreams. Without discounting religious influence, I am convinced that such an emphasis is overly exaggerated, not especially helpful in understanding his work, and ultimately a disservice to Ramanujan. In attempting to discount mystical ascriptions to Ramanujan's thinking, Hardy said that, at bottom, all mathematicians use similar reasoning. Of course, Ramanujan thought much better—that is, more deeply—than the vast majority of mathematicians. He had insights, creativity, and ingenuity that few have ever matched. In 1984, I asked S. Janaki if her husband was religious. She said that he was not and that most of the religious stories attributed to him originated with others. She recalled that her husband never went to the temple because he was continually absorbed with mathematics. Often she and her mother-in-law had to feed Ramanujan because he would not take time out from his mathematics to eat. It should be emphasized that the Hindu and Western meanings of the word *religious* are somewhat different. Ramanujan faithfully observed all of the customs of his caste, family, and Hindu culture, and in this sense, he was quite religious.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Today, in India, Ramanujan is revered more than any other Indian scientific figure, present or past. Several mathematical meetings celebrating the centenary of Ramanujan's birth were held in India during 1987 and early 1988. These meetings received extensive coverage by the press and TV: Prime Minister Gandhi inaugurated the country's primary celebration in Madras. *The Daily Hindu*, probably India's leading English-language newspaper, not only prominently featured many articles on the centenary meetings but also, on the days of December 20 and 27, 1987, and January 3, 1988, devoted full pages to the life of Ramanujan. During 1987, at least one British and three Indian films were made on Ramanujan's life. Such extensive media coverage of a scientist has seldom if ever been equaled in the West. The recognition of Ramanujan's name in India can perhaps only be compared with the recognition that the names of Newton and Einstein have in Western culture. Despite the fame of Ramanujan in his native land, Ramanujan's mathematics is not widely known in the Indian mathematical community. To be sure, there are several who have studied and appreciate Ramanujan's mathematics. In particular, K. G. Ramanathan in Bombay and K. Venkatachaliengar in Bangalore have devoted several years to proving Ramanujan's claims. But generally Ramanujan's mathematics seems to be more appreciated and understood in the United States and Western Europe.

Hardy claimed in 1937 that "Ramanujan ought to have been born 100 years ago"; Richard Askey of the University of Wisconsin, on the other hand, recently asserted that "Ramanujan should have been born 100 years later." Much of Ramanujan's mathematics is in the style of nineteenth-century mathematics. Ramanujan was a formalist in an era when rigor, and not formal argument, was most important. More precisely, Ramanujan often employed heuristic thinking and unrigorous arguments in deriving formulas and proving theorems. Hardy felt that the age of great formulas was past; Ramanujan was an expert at deriving beautiful, elegant formulas. In the past decade or so, formulas have regained prominence with the increased realization that important information is frequently encapsulated in a formula or that useful information can be deduced from it. Ramanujan was also a master at finding particular results, while most of the thrust in twentieth-century mathematics has been to build general theories. With the development of many of these theories, mathematicians now realize that some of Ramanujan's particular results and claims provide central examples for the theories, and, moreover, they help determine the best directions for further advancement.

Although much of Ramanujan's mathematics was old-fashioned, in many respects he was far ahead of his time. Many results that remained hidden in his notebooks or unpublished papers for several years were

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

later rediscovered by others who have received credit for them. Hardy estimated that at least two-thirds of the work that Ramanujan did in India before coming to England was rediscovery of work already done. In fact, more than half of the results found in Ramanujan's notebooks in the past decade are new even at this time. Still further results have yet to be proved. Hardy claimed that some of Ramanujan's mathematics would have been greater if it had not been so strange. Many of Ramanujan's theorems that were once perceived as strange are considered less so now that we have a better understanding of where they fit with the rest of mathematics. If Ramanujan were alive today, he doubtless could remove the mystery that still surrounds some of his work.

Because of the unique circumstances surrounding Ramanujan and his mathematics, it is very difficult to assess properly his greatness among such great mathematical giants as Newton, Gauss, Euler, and Riemann. Hardy himself provided an assessment among certain contemporaries by rating mathematicians on the basis of pure talent on a scale of 0 to 100. He gave himself a score of 25, his collaborator J. E. Littlewood 30, the great German mathematician D. Hilbert 80, and Ramanujan 100. After Ramanujan's death in 1920, his work was held in uniformly high esteem for more than five decades. In the past decade or so, Ramanujan's reputation has soared even higher. An examination of the proceedings of the Ramanujan Centenary Conference held at the University of Illinois in June 1987 everywhere demonstrates Ramanujan's profound influence on contemporary mathematical research. Only when all of Ramanujan's theorems are proved and his work thoroughly understood can a definitive judgment of his influence be made. For now, it is not Ramanujan's greatness that is in doubt, but only the precise measure of his greatness.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Remembering Renan

WALLACE FOWLIE

I

16, rue Chaptal—Noémi Renan

FROM THE DAY OF MY ARRIVAL at 16, rue Chaptal, the home of Madame Noémi Renan, I was curious about the house itself, about its quaintness and its history. As soon as I had become accustomed to my part of the house, a very small bedroom and a small parlor where I worked at a good-sized table, and for as long as I lived there during two winters in the middle 1930s, before World War II broke out, I continued to ask Mme Renan about the house, during lunch and dinner when we were alone at the dining room table. On this particular topic, I had to ask the questions. On other topics, often related to the house, and because they were almost always on French literature and history, Mme Renan would speak easily and at length. The details about the house touched on more personal, more intimate subjects, and I soon realized that there I had to be more guarded and more willing to forego total knowledge. The deeper dramas were not divulged. They were hinted at. The expression on her face told me then to move to some other topic.

If, during lunch, she avoided a direct answer to one of my awkward questions, she might, after dinner that night when I occasionally joined her in the large parlor for an hour of further talk, revive the question herself and add a bit more information about it. She never forgot those matters I often inadvertently brought up. They stirred her memory, and she answered what she felt she could answer to her young American friend, who would never possibly comprehend the whole story and all the other stories she held in her heart and in her mind.

There were still faint traces on her face of a beautiful young girl. For both meals she dressed in simple, impeccable fashion, as if I were a guest and not merely a boarder in her home studying the documents she gave me about her son Ernest Psichari, the subject of my doctoral

✪ WALLACE FOWLIE, professor of French at Duke University, is the author of, most recently, *Sites: A Third Memoir; Characters from Proust: Poems*; and *Aubade: A Teacher's Notebook*.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

dissertation. Over her shoulders and covering her bosom there was usually a light shawl at lunch, or a collar of flat jet beads at dinner. She tempered the brilliance of the beads with a wisp of black net placed over the space of flesh at her neck. The unhealthy flush of old age in both cheeks contrasted with the pallor of her face and its heavy abundant flesh. Her face had such an inquisitive comprehending gaze that the shades of softness in her eyes were constantly being abandoned for shadows of intelligence, ideas, facts.

I looked forward to each meal and to the conversation that stimulated and informed me about many matters. And I grew to believe that she too looked forward to the meals and our talks together. She seldom asked me questions about my life in America because her mind lived in a past that she rehearsed with me. I realized soon that Mme Renan was supreme in speech, in rhetoric, in the simple capacity of prolonging any theme far beyond its deserved profundity by the number of words and sentences she could deploy. She outwinded me easily in every conversation no matter the topic.

When I learned that the house had been built by Ary Scheffer in 1830, I had to find out who he was. A French painter, born in Dordrecht, Holland, in 1785, at the end of the French Revolution, he had begun painting at the age of twelve and showed such talent that his mother decided that only Paris would allow her son to develop his gift. He was French at heart, and chose, when the time came, Montmartre for his house and his studio. The site, 16, rue Chaptal, was not far from the noisy Pigalle section of Montmartre, but none of the noise ever reached the house built at the end of a passage *(une allée)*, originally a carriage drive lined with trees and lilac bushes. It was, and still is, a charming provincial-looking house with a short outside stairway going up the main entrance. Below the first floor is a basement kitchen, where Esther, an expert cook and kind woman, prepared our meals and carried them up to the dining room.

I could see through a low window the copper warming pans *(bassinoires)* and the huge fish kettles *(poissonnières)* decorating the kitchen and testifying to what must have been a more than comfortable bourgeois existence during the Restoration.

Each morning Esther carried my breakfast tray to my bedroom, the first room on the right on entering the hall from the outside stairway. The dining room was opposite my room. Behind the dining room was a large parlor where Mme Renan sat each evening for an hour or two before retiring to her upstairs bedroom. Beside the large parlor was a small parlor reserved for me and my work whenever I lived in Ary Scheffer's house.

The narrative of one hundred years, 1830 to the middle 1930s,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

provided me, thanks to Mme Renan's conversation, with stories of history and politics, the Restoration, the Dreyfus Affair, young Ernest Renan meeting, in the very house where we talked, the niece of the painter, Cornélie Scheffer, whom he married. Their child was Noémi Renan, the lady I ate with each day and who instructed me, in fragments, about Ary Scheffer, his house, his niece, his paintings, his despair over the Revolution of 1848, his friends who came to the house: Chopin, Liszt, Gobineau, Tocqueville, Ingres, Turgenev, Lamartine, Thierry. All of those names, and others less famous today, passed before me, not like ghosts, but like strong personalities. The name that held first place, mentioned in some way or other every day, was the name of the father: Ernest Renan.

I had studied some of Renan's works at Harvard and was well aware of his importance as historian, philologist, and literary stylist. In a totally false way I opposed in my mind the two names of Ernest Renan and Ernest Psichari, the venerable famous grandfather and the far less famous grandson, killed in Belgium in 1914.

The younger Ernest, Psichari, was the reason for my being in that house. During the first winter I examined his letters and notebooks in order to document my thesis, and the second winter, when the thesis had been written and accepted, I began to pay more attention to Ernest Renan of Brittany. With only the slightest encouragement on my part, Mme Renan spoke of her father. The tragedy of her son's death and his religious conversion were, I believed, deliberately put aside in the conversation during our meals. Ernest Renan was, after all, the major eminence in the family. The house, at 16, rue Chaptal, was the site of his courtship of Cornélie Scheffer. In speaking of this courtship of her father and mother, Noémi Renan made it into a love story, which indeed it was.

At times she referred to the energetic youthfulness of her two sons, Ernest and Michel, both killed in World War I, of the diminished glory of Ary Scheffer, and of the historical importance of his house where she lived. But her genuine eloquence was always reserved for her father. I know now that she was right in her preference, although I fought it in my own mind as we ate and talked.

Her background was Protestant; her husband, Jean Psichari, a philologist and professor of modern Greek, was Greek Orthodox; her son Ernest was a convert to the Catholic Church. The story of his conversion, related in his four books, was inevitably contrasted in the Paris press with the story of his grandfather leaving the seminary and renouncing the vocation of priest when he had lost his early faith.

Mme Renan and I never directly spoke of any theological matters. The closest we came to theology was Renan's philosophical, historical, and philological interests toward the Catholic Church. The books we

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

referred to the most often were: *La Vie de Jésus, La Vie de saint Paul,* and *Marc-Aurèle.* I brought back into the conversation, whenever I thought I could, my favorite book of Renan, one of the last he wrote, *Souvenirs d'enfance et de jeunesse,* because there I had read of the boy Ernest falling in love with a little girl Noémi who died. And I remembered the sentence where Renan wrote that, if he ever had a daughter, he would call her "Noémi." Only a few years after reading that sentence and being deeply moved by the autobiographical work, I was sitting each day in Paris at the dining room table and talking with that Noémi.

How fortunate that we had no arguments about theology! How wise she was to emphasize her father's love and respect for the person of Jesus, and never once to criticize her son for turning away from Renan's convictions and revindicating the Church by his conversion! I felt in the midst of church history but without any of the all too familiar elements of belligerency. Mme Renan's serenity reflected her father's serenity. She preferred to remind me of Renan's visits to that house and to Ary Scheffer. The historian Augustin Thierry had introduced the young scholar Renan to the painter, and thus to the painter's niece, Cornélie.

It was not easy in those days to pay court to a young girl. The Scheffers received their friends regularly on Friday evenings. Ernest Renan became an assiduous guest. At first, it was impossible to see Cornélie alone. One Friday he announced to the group of friends that he was writing an article on the death of Augustin Thierry for *Le Journal des débats.* Cornélie expressed the desire to see the article before it was printed. He sent her the article with a short note *(Mademoiselle, vos désirs sont des ordres . . . je vous transmets les deux chiffons que voici.)* Cornélie was not unaware of the partially concealed emotion in the note.

The request for Cornélie's hand in marriage did not come immediately. Another drama was taking place in the rue Val-de-Grâce, where Ernest lived with his sister Henriette, who at first opposed the idea of the marriage. She believed there was too much disparity between the worldliness of the Scheffers and the simple peasant background of the Renans. Henriette forced her brother to declare that he would not see Cornélie again. His sorrow was so evident that Henriette repented and came one night to rue Chaptal to announce to Ernest's fiancée that the sister was restoring her brother's happiness. It was the spring of 1856 and the renascence of a love that was never to change.

Mme Renan ended that little story by saying that it was because of the drama between the rue Val-de-Grâce, close to the boulevard Saint Michel, and the rue Chaptal, close to the boulevard de Clichy, that she was here today in the house of Ary Scheffer. When her father first came to the house, two years before the marriage, he was a timid young man. By the time of the marriage, he was already making his way toward glory.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The marriage was celebrated on September 13, 1856, first in a Protestant church (le temple de l'Oratoire) and then in a Catholic church (Saint-Germain-l'Auxerrois.)

As a footnote to her story, Noémi Renan added that some years after the meeting between Ernest and Cornélie, the house was rejuvenated by visits of Anatole France, and still later by the passionate discussions of Charles Péguy. For my old friend, the house at 16, rue Chaptal was primarily the peaceful refuge where her father found his happiness.

I remember the first time when she suggested at the end of dinner that I sit with her for a brief spell in the parlor. I had wanted to do this, but had hesitated for fear of tiring her with more conversation. I watched her walk to the table lamp to light it. A wall light at the farther end gave only a feeble illumination. There, concentrated on the table with its neatly piled copies of *La Revue des deux mondes* and on the large figure bending down beside it, a rich glow from under the brocaded shade fell steadily and—as it seemed to me—slowly, in order to correspond to the measured movements of Mme Renan as she felt her way into the chair contiguous to the table.

The room seemed large to me, overcrowded with furniture and souvenirs of something more than one hundred years. Heavy curtains at her right blocked off the dining room. We could hear the clinking of wine glasses as Esther cleared the table. "I am too often alone in this large room," she said to me on that first after-dinner visit. "It is so filled with the past, with the past that is dead, that on some evenings when Esther retires early, I feel I have died also."

I mentioned to her the rue Bonaparte where I had gone on an errand that afternoon, and said how much I loved that section of Paris. I caught myself speaking as if I were a Parisian: "I deliberately got off the bus at the Institut and walked down the entire rue Bonaparte to the Place Saint-Germain. It was just turning dark. The art shops were all lighted, and, since it was already a week from New Year's, the shopkeepers were taking out of the windows their most prized pieces and putting back the familiar ones we see all year."

She apparently listened to me, but I knew that inwardly she was formulating her own opinion. "It is a beautiful part of Paris," she said, "but has always seemed to me too sad, too grave. There is a monotony in all those streets between the Seine and the Boulevard Saint-Germain. Even the church itself is colder and more austere than other churches of Paris."

By this time in our developing friendship, I knew that her gods were science, democracy, and beauty. Truth was redefined with each century, and man attained his dignity by searching for it. I always feared that she would consider me hostile to her beliefs, and I often spoke of the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

gratitude I felt for the vigorous way in which she revived her past for me. When she apologized that the room in which we sat was a museum with its family photographs, the table with its heavy lamp, the divan so narrow that one could only sit on it straight and uncomfortably, I insisted that it was more for me than a museum. I pointed out to her the six tall volumes of *Les Origines du Christianisme* of Renan, preserved behind glass. They were bound in green leather with gold lettering. And I would say to her that each time I looked at them, through the glass, I felt urged to continue with my own work.

II

Tréguier: Ernest Renan

Before I returned to 16, rue Chaptal for a second winter visit and work period in Paris, I spent, during an intervening summer in France, a week in Tréguier, Renan's birthplace in Brittany, inland in the province but not very far from the sea. I had already seen some of the coastline, Quiberon and Perros-Guirec, but I had wanted, above all, to see the town of Tréguier and visit the house itself where Renan was born, and which was being restored thanks to the efforts of his two granddaughters, Henriette Psichari and Corrie Siohan. Through the writings of Renan, and especially the novels of Pierre Loti, I was familiar with the gray sky of Brittany, the granite color of its houses and the slate of its roofs. I had crossed once on a patrol boat *(une vedette)* to the rose-gray island of Bréhat, and from there in the evening watched the lighthouses blinking against a foggy sky.

The center of Tréguier is the cathedral, with the purest ogives, or pointed arches, I have ever seen. The interior of the cathedral has the warmest natural light of any church I have visited. The main attraction of the small garden close to the cathedral is the statue of Ernest Renan whose heavy bronze belly seems to sink down onto the bench where he sits. Mme Renan told me the statue was inaugurated by the anti-clerical political figure Emile Combes at the beginning of the century when he was proposing the law of separation of Church and State. She said that his voice, during the inaugural address, was covered up by the ringing of the cathedral bells. One hundred meters from that garden, on the street now called la rue Ernest Renan, you will come upon the house, the site today of a museum and pilgrimage, called *la maison Renan.*

On my first visit, Henriette Psichari showed me the entire house, from top to bottom, and introduced me to the devoted guardian, Mme Jeanne Filous who, on subsequent visits, demonstrated to me considerable learning about the beginnings of Renan's life. Her piety was

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

fervent. Formerly a baker in Louannec, she had become one of those faithful servants who belong to the family they serve.

The house is a humble peasant dwelling that was built in the first years of the seventeenth century. Renan was born there in 1823. In 1845 he left the seminary and gave up his intention of becoming a priest. His mother (because of this semi-scandal) had to leave Tréguier for Saint-Malo. Renan did not return to his native town until 1882. It was then a triumphant return. For many years the house had been rented, but the cult of Renan had been maintained by the Psichari family and by Michel Psichari's marriage to the daughter of Anatole France and later by their son Lucien Psichari. Renan and France had close philosophical and spiritual beliefs.

In 1923, the centenary celebration of Renan's birth, the house as a modest museum was opened to the public. The ground floor is one large room that served as kitchen with its huge fireplace, and as bedroom too. There are portraits of Renan, autographs, caricatures, and his academician's sword. I looked into his address book of later years where I saw the names of Michelet, Guizot, and Monseigneur Dupanloup (the priest who protected him until the publication of *La Vie de Jésus*).

Of all the relics in that room, I was most moved by the green shawl of Henriette. She wore it whenever she called on her brother in Paris—a modest shawl that, in the words of Renan himself, "had sheltered her proud poverty" *(ce châle qui avait abrité sa fière pauvreté)*.

All of these objects are still today in the musée Renan in Tréguier, which was given to the French government by the granddaughters. The house has been restored without changing the original forms. The fireplace has been rebuilt with the rose-colored granite from the île Bréhat.

From her memories Mme Renan spoke to me particularly of the third floor where there is a small room warmly illuminated by daylight. It was young Ernest's room, with a view over a good deal of the city and the river where the incoming tide was always visible. The small desk is there on which he wrote his school exercises, and the notebooks themselves are carefully grouped together, beside the prize books won every year. I remember seeing Fénelon's *Télémaque*, his history prize in the *cinquième* grade. The life of the school boy is restored on the third floor as carefully as the life of the academician and the professor at the Collège de France is restored on the ground floor.

As Henriette Psichari showed me the treasures of the house, she spoke at the same time of her work on the new edition of the complete works of her grandfather, to be published by Calmann-Lévy. The ten volumes were published between 1947 and 1969. Of all of her "scholarly" works, I like best her edition of *La Prière sur l'Acropole*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

(1956), the Renan text that still figures in the lycée program, and the text by which, I imagine, he is best remembered. At Henriette's birth in 1884 she was given the name of Euphrosyne, but with her first publication she adopted the name of Henriette, in memory of Renan's sister. At her death in 1972, she was a very old lady, older than her mother Noémi Renan, at her death in 1943.

I listened through many years to these two ladies, mother and daughter, who preserved very special memories of Ernest Renan. Noémi's memories were sentimental and loving. Henriette's were a veritable cult for the ideas, political and philosophical, and the scholarly achievements of her grandfather.

III

Ernest Renan (1823–1892)

During the past decade of my life, the traces of any resentment I may have felt toward Renan have disappeared. I have returned to reading pages of his *Averrhoès,* and especially of his *Saint Paul.* My friendship at Duke with my colleague in the Divinity School, W. D. Davies, may be one of the reasons for this renewed interest. W. D., as he is called, also wrote at the beginning of his career a study of Saint Paul, and now he is writing and editing a long history of Israel for the Cambridge Press. There are several parallels in the life story of Renan and in the very rich scholarly career of Professor Davies.

Ernest Renan bore the name of a Breton saint who lived as a hermit. Like so many Bretons, he was haunted throughout his life by religion and by the sea. These have been called the two voices of Brittany. His father, a sea captain, died when Ernest was five. He was raised by two women, his mother and his sister Henriette. His intuitive sensitivity, so different from the more provocative Chateaubriand, may be traced to them. They knew that Ernest was promised to God, and they were determined that he would become one of God's priests.

His sister secured for him a scholarship at the Paris seminary of Saint-Nicolas-du-Chardonneret. There the director, M. Dupanloup, who later became a monseigneur, presided over Renan's early studies and was fully aware of the boy's powers. After a year at the seminary of Issy (1842–43), he moved to the important Paris seminary of Saint-Sulpice, where he studied Hebrew under Abbé Le Hir. His first doubts assailed him there. At twenty, he put off receiving the tonsure and minor orders. At twenty-two, he refused the sub-diaconate and left the seminary (1845).

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

At one of his assistant-teaching posts (la pension Crouzet), he met and befriended Marcelin Berthelot (1827–1907), destined to become an eminent scientist and political leader. After receiving a degree *(une licence)* in literature and one in science, he won an *agrégation* in philosophy, and then began a lifelong study of philology. Later he claimed that the study of historical criticism *(la critique historique)* and especially Hebrew philology, destroyed his faith. He wrote on the semitic languages, and, urged by Berthelot, wrote on modern science, *L'Avenir de la science*, a book he did not publish until two years before his death. This book stresses the belief that authority for man is human nature and not divine revelation. Man's reason is the power that will reform society by means of rational science.

In the middle of the century, Renan did considerable research in the Vatican Library, and at the same time discovered the beauty of Italy, the light of its skies and its flowers. There he worked on Averrhoès, the Arabian philosopher of the twelfth century, whose writings were condemned by the University of Paris and by the pope, as being materialist and pantheist doctrine. This was the subject of Renan's thesis that made him a doctor at age twenty-nine (1852): *Averrhoès et l'averrhoisme*—a provocative thesis for an ex-seminarian to write. His marriage in 1856 marked the definitive break with the priesthood.

Renan's style as a writer is both scholarly and priestly. He always remained a Breton, nostalgic for his native province. All of his writings are based on his belief that the Semites invented monotheism and transmitted it to the Aryans. As a student of Hebrew, he looked upon Christianity as a Jewish fact. The origins of Christianity, according to Renan, are not in the writings of the Fathers of the Church, but in the apocryphal books of Jewish origin.

As I read Renan, I began to understand for the first time that history is in reality the history of religion, and that the religious sentiment is the profoundest and the most permanent instinct in man. This is why I renewed my contact with Renan, not only in the 1930s on the rue Chaptal, but in the last few decades of my own life.

In Syria, in 1860–61, where Renan was on an archaeological mission, his sister Henriette, who accompanied him, died from a fever. On his return to Paris, at the age of thirty-nine, he was given a professorship at the Collège de France to teach the Hebraic, Chaldean, and Syriac languages. In his inaugural lesson he spoke of Jesus as an "incomparable man" *(homme incomparable)*. Five days later his course was suspended (1862) as being an offense against Christian belief. Attacks against Renan were even stronger the following year (1863) when he published *La vie de Jésus*. Renan wanted to be only a scholar and a historian.

In this controversial book, he wrote a pastoral story treating Jesus as

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

a handsome man unable to keep people from loving him, unable not to perform miracles in the midst of children and people acclaiming him. Then later, in the third volume of the *Histoire des origines du Christianisme* (1869), he wrote the story of Saint Paul, whom he looked upon as a fanatic able to set fire to a village and massacre the inhabitants. Still later, when Renan was sixty, he wrote the story of Marcus Aurelius *(Marc-Aurèle)*, a courageous emperor who wanted the good for all men.

One day, at rue Chaptal, in summarizing some of her stories, Noémi Renan said to me that her father wanted to be the spiritual director of his time. She used the phrase *directeur de conscience*. In accord with his chemist friend Berthelot, Renan wanted criticism and philosophy to protect science. In his unique way, Renan remained the Breton priest independent of his bishop. He distrusted religious symbols, which he considered perishable. The study of philology was a kind of prayer for Renan, as the study of chemistry was a prayer for Berthelot.

Part of me responded strongly to these thoughts, which were always offset in Noémi Renan's conversation by the picture she gave of the social and political Renan. She seemed proud when she said that her father at the end of the Second Empire was often a guest of la Princesse Mathilde (1820–1904), daughter of Jérôme, brother of Napoleon Bonaparte. Her Paris salon (where Marcel Proust often went) was one of the most brilliant at the end of the century.

Renan felt deeply the disaster of the Franco-Prussian War. He became almost a pontiff during the Third Republic as he developed in his writings the concept of the French Nation. Elected to the Académie Française in 1878, he was made in 1883 administrator of the Collège de France from which Napoleon III had ostracized him.

Some called Renan the Montaigne of the Third Republic, as he refused to affirm anything in such sentences as: *Qui sait si la vérité n'est pas triste?* (Who knows if truth is not sad?) He belongs understandably to the line of doubters that goes from Montaigne to Anatole France and to André Gide. In one of Renan's most celebrated texts, his *Prière sur l'Acropole*, constantly referred to in my presence at lunch and dinner, Renan claims that good and evil, pleasure and pain, the beautiful and the ugly, reason and madness, have as many indiscernible shadings as those we see on the neck of a dove.

IV

Renan's Prayer on the Acropolis

The references Noémi Renan made to the *Prière* were, as I remember, fragments of quotations. I always recognized them. The phrases are

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

so memorable—as are the lines of a great poem—that I knew them without having literally memorized them. I had read the text first in *Souvenirs d'enfance et de jeunesse,* but passages from it had been used in various ways in general courses I had taken in college in nineteenth-century French literature.

After the second winter with Noémi Renan and the summer with Henriette Psichari in Perros-Guirec and Tréguier, I returned to the text when I was at Yale during the four war years and when there was no chance of reaching France. There the *Prière* became an experience of reading for me. During the one conversation I had with Henri Focillon, ill in his rooms at the Taft Hotel, he spoke of the page because he wanted to speak of Noémi Renan, whom he admired. In a way he was testing me, trying me out to see if I could respond, not so much to the ideas in the *Prière,* but to the music of those lines and to their images. Then he would forget to test me as he himself was caught up by the rhythm and the beauty of the lines. "A jewel," he called it, "shining forth in the midst of all the memories of a philosopher."

Such words of that wise man urged me back once again to the text, and I began again marveling at the resonance that I heard between the text and me the reader. I could easily find reasons for that resonance I experienced—reasons in my own religious background and in my study of French, but I never discovered all the reasons, because they would be from all of my life—the years I remembered and the years I had forgotten. Alone, with that text as I read it out loud, I experienced, without totally understanding it, the magical power of words. My vocation of teacher of literature appeared to me then as a force I would never have been able to deny or refuse. It confirmed me in every way—in my search for belief, for beauty in literature, for ideas that would stimulate me and that I could understand in the experiences of my own life.

The role of the text was revealed to me at 16, rue Chaptal. Noémi Renan told me something of the long history of the text, and that history years later was written carefully and lucidly by Henriette Psichari in her edition, *La Prière sur l'Acropole et ses mystères.*

Behind every work of art there is a man, and our knowledge of that man enriches his work without destroying it. This conviction guides me in the three courses I now give at Duke and elsewhere: courses in Dante, Rimbaud, Proust.

La Prière is made up of arguments for and against Christianity, and arguments for and against Greek civilization. Renan reiterates many times that no one religion possesses all truth. Christianity neglected the rules of Reason that the Greeks followed. The temple on the Acropolis in Athens is more reasonable than the huge Gothic cathedrals of France.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Greek philosophy is incomplete because of its reliance on Reason and because it speaks to an elite. Christian churches with their liturgy and songs give to the huge congregations filling cathedrals on holy days the sensation and the feeling of the divine.

The subjective parts of the *Prière* meant the most to me, and still do today as I mingle in my mind Renan's theme of his childhood and my own memories of childhood and the hours spent in a church. At the prayer's beginning, Renan tells us that he came late to the threshold of the Greek mysteries: *J'arrive tard au seuil de tes mystères.* More than for the typical young Athenian, Renan had needed endless research and endless reflection to comprehend the simple true beauty of the Greeks *(ô beauté simple et vraie).* He was born on the shore of a dark sea bristling with rocks, forever beaten by storms *(une mer sombre, hérissée de rochers, toujours battue par les orages).*

With these memories of Brittany, so different from the memories of a young Athenian, he speaks of his priests coming originally from Palestine, holy men who taught him how God (Cronus) created the world and how his Son spent some time on the earth. Their temples are three times higher than Greek temples, but they fall into ruins at the end of four or five hundred years. Their builders did not follow the laws of reason. Those priests were wise holy men. *(Ces prêtres étaient sages et saints.)* And yet, they attacked the son of Brittany when he wrote the life story of the young God who walked on the earth. They called him Evhémère, the Greek god in the third century B.C. who humanized mythological characters.

Difficulties remained for Renan, habits of his mind that had to be changed, bewitching memories that had to be wrenched from his heart. It was late in his life when he recognized perfect beauty. *(Tard, je t'ai connue, beauté parfaite.)* He ended his prayer with very simple and very tragic words, summarizing his thought: "Everything on this earth is symbol and dream." *(Tout n'est ici-bas que symbole et songe.)* "The gods pass as men pass, and it would not be good for them to be eternal." *(Les dieux passent comme les hommes, et il ne serait pas bon qu'ils fussent éternels.)*

Since Renan wrote his *Prière,* how many young men like myself have held similar thoughts—at least temporarily or intermittently—and suffered from their search for truth, because of the memories of their childhood coupled with their desire to break with the past. The *Prière* is a prose poem, and today I can still study it, recite it, and feel once more seduced by the harmonious balancing of its sentences. It remains one of a small handful of works that I have found indispensable.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Writing About American Politics

RICHARD BROOKHISER

There comes a point in every presidential election, in my experience of covering them, when one hits the wall. In 1984, the wall appeared before me in Cleveland. I was traveling with the Mondale campaign, which had arrived in the late afternoon. "You can almost be sure," Mondale had said earlier in the day, "where people are suffering, Ronald Reagan will be somewhere else." Mondale himself had been somewhere else when he said it, specifically at a party on the back lawn of the governor's mansion in Columbus. The clumsiness of it—flailing your opponent's remoteness from suffering while you look out over a couple of acres of grass, old trees, and a picnic buffet—was not seriously jarring. Mondale was making what was, in his political worldview, an important point; and he was making it in the venue that happened to be handy. The only sane attitude to take toward these little slips of tongue and mind is light irony. And yet, hearing them, day after day, week after week, they silt up.

It had been overcast in Columbus, and it was overcast in Cleveland as the Mondale plane landed. Lake Erie looked, out the scratched and tinted plane windows, like gray oatmeal, diluted with ice water. We were deposited in some tall, old downtown hotel, that had kept its share of the business that Cleveland has kept, although it faced, on one side, a flat expanse of former city that had, after presumably withering, now become parking lot. There was the usual wait for room keys. There was the usual smell of hotel carpeting, like the carpeting on the floors of cars. The room had windows you couldn't open. It got dark. We were supposed to rise bright and early the next morning to watch Mondale ride in a tugboat up and down the Cleveland waterfront. Suddenly, I came down with a headache—a real skull-buster. It was as if a band of Trinidadians, having lost their steel drums, had decided to use my pate instead. Rummaging in my battered dop kit for aspirin, I found I didn't have any. Neither, it turned out, did the hotel newsstand. I am undergoing *this*, I thought to myself in a self-pitying funk, in order to hear Walter Mondale?

I never wrote about my lousy night in Cleveland, for its causes were temperamental and physical, something any groupie on the road might feel, no matter what group, no matter what road. It was also temporary; I took myself to the tugboat the next morning. The political reporters who hit the wall during the last election between George Bush and Michael Dukakis wrote about it—coverage resounded with the thuds of their anger and pain—with a combination of boredom and disgust. "The fall campaign," Mary McGrory warned in the *Washington Post* as early as June 1988, "could bring us to a new low in mindlessness." That was the press's running verdict, from summer on through the November postmortems. Their repulsion was moral, and categorical. They did not simply dislike the ambience; they rejected and scorned the process and the participants.

These were scarcely new complaints. For

✪ RICHARD BROOKHISER is senior editor of the *National Review* and a columnist for the *New York Observer*. He is the author of *The Outside Story: How Democrats and Republicans Re-elected Reagan*.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the last twenty years, the consensus of reporters following the campaign and commentators observing it has been that the presidential elections have been dirty (as in 1980), empty (as in 1984 or 1976), or both (1972). Jack Germond and Jules Witcover spoke for their profession when they entitled their book on the 1984 election *Wake Me Up When It's Over*; their collaboration on 1980 was called *Blue Smoke and Mirrors*.

Anyone who seeks to spread the disdain around can simply call up the voting figures. Since the post-war peak in 1960, when almost 63 percent of Americans eligible to go to the polls actually did so, the figures have been sliding toward the low fifties. In the rest of the democratic world, by contrast, the percentage of turnout ranges from the low seventies (Japan) to the high eighties (West Germany).

These figures are open to a variety of interpretations. Some of the heavily voting foreigners live in countries with proportional systems in which even votes for minor parties count, since they, too, can win seats in the legislature. What cannot be denied is the contempt that so many professional observers of the process feel for it. To read their copy, an American presidential election is dullness relieved only by mendacity, boredom lightly spiced with lying. The wonder is that they can bring themselves to keep coming back. They will, of course. By 1990, 1991 at the very latest, it will be time again for them to reacquaint themselves with plane schedules into Des Moines; with car rentals in Concord and Manchester. Along with the hopefuls and the handlers they cover, the campaign press will fan out over the preliminary stomping grounds—and send back complaining reports.

My problem with this picture of American campaigning is that it is not like the campaigns I have actually seen. The elections I have followed—the same ones everyone else saw—seemed interesting, not empty; filled with meaning, if disordered. The candidates and their supporters were almost always saying something, though they seldom said it well. Take the Mondale tugboat ride, for which I rallied from my migraine five years ago. It was a pure photo-op, designed to show the candidate's concern for the rust belt. Only the cameramen actually got to ride with Mondale; the pencil press tagged along in a second tug, relying for its knowledge of Mondale's remarks on a pool reporter. He didn't say anything memorable. But on the riverbank, as we docked after our little expedition, there stood a Mondale supporter—a young man, in a billed union cap, holding a sign that said: WE CAN'T ALL BE COMPUTER PROGRAMMERS. PUT AMERICA'S BASIC INDUSTRIES BACK TO WORK. This too, of course, was a photo-op, a small, paid professional announcement (the sign had been printed by the Maritime Trades Division of the AFL-CIO). But it suggested a real problem, which was the pathos of falling and rising industries; more profoundly, the pathos of the defenders of dug-in positions. It was a glance, a moment, but one that offered food for thought. If one was hungry. Or thinking.

Add up a few thousand such moments, and you have a campaign—though not, it would seem, the campaign that gets written about. The dullness of American elections, it seems to me, thanks in part to Walter Mondale, his tugboat, and the union stalwart in Cleveland, is in the eye of the beholder. The problem with presidential politics is that they are covered, in large part, by people who do not know their business.

Modern political writing—certainly the political writing that appears, when the tulips do, half a year after election day, between hard covers—begins with Theodore H. White's *Making of the President 1960*. There had been political writing before that, but White cleaned the slate. Harold Bloom has coined the phrase "the anxiety of influence" to describe the mixture of admiration and resentment with which Wordsworth, Blake, and the other Romantic poets viewed Milton, their "poetic precursor." For three decades the Milton of campaign book writers has been Teddy White (if lesser things with great may be compared, as Milton might say). Sometimes White's role as a model was negative. Just as Shelley thought the hero of *Paradise Lost* was Satan, so a number of campaign chroniclers have proceeded on the assumption that White got it all wrong. But he was in their minds nonetheless.

When a man invents a form that becomes so popular, it is worth looking at—especially when looking at it is so easy (a dozen-plus books give an adequate idea of the formula and its permutations). What White did and didn't do, and what his peers and successors

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

have done by way of imitation, correction, and rejection, covers the spectrum of recent political reporting.

A word about the pre-White world of political writing. Some specimens of it have become classics: H. L. Mencken on conventions; Westbrook Pegler on Henry Wallace's guru, Nicholas Roerich; A. J. Liebling's account of Earl Long's last election, *The Earl of Louisiana*. They share several features. The first is a vivid attention to the surface of things—the mannerisms of speakers, the sound of bands and accents, food, weather, the look of a pol's necktie. Here is Liebling at a rally in rural Louisiana.

> [The candidate] wore a jacket, shirt, and tie, a pattern of statesmanlike conventionality on a night when everybody off the platform was coatless and tieless. The tie itself was a quiet pattern of ink-blots against an olive and pearl background. . . . "We got a wonderful climate," he said, and paused to wipe the sweat from his face with a handkerchief soaked in Coca-Cola, which he poured from a bottle out of a bucket of ice handed to him by one of the lesser candidates on his ticket.

These details were recorded not only for their own sakes, but as clues to underlying realities. Liebling's reportorial account of the Long family is not only better written than Robert Penn Warren's fictional one in *All the King's Men*, it offers, within its more modest compass, at least as good a feel for the texture of life in Louisiana (notice the lesser candidate handing up the ice bucket).

Another characteristic of the old-time writing is that it didn't require much understanding of the immediate political situation. Mencken's 1932 judgment of FDR—"here was a great party convention, after almost a week of cruel labor, nominating the weakest candidate before it"—has become notorious. It is also clear from *The Earl of Louisiana* that Liebling had a loose grip on the contest he was reporting. He came into a strange state, and quickly made a myth for himself, of Earl Long as a noble savage: a huckster with advanced views on race. When, at the end of the book, Long makes a deal with the segregationist diehards, Liebling records it, with mute incomprehension. The pre-White classics are often like pictures with bright highlights and solid compositional bone structures. It's the middle ground that's smudgy.

White's first book offered to take that middle ground out of the shadows. The verb in the title was *making*. *MP 1960* was a book about how it had been done; perhaps even a how-to book (George McGovern, at least, would claim that it had inspired him, a fact duly noted in *MP 1972*). "On Tuesday, November 8, 1960," White wrote, "68,832,818 Americans voted. Of these sixty-eight million, between 3,500,000 and 4,000,000 *actively* . . . participated in the campaign. . . . Yet, of all these active citizens, fewer perhaps than a thousand had been aware a year earlier that the germinal decisions that would govern their actions were then being taken or had already been taken. And of this thousand alert and sensitive enough to know what was happening, fewer than fifty were present at those initial meetings of three or five or twelve, far below the level of press notice and public attention, when the seven principal candidates of 1960 coldly surveyed the awesome problem of acquisition of power in America." White would lay out the process, from the three, to the millions.

As readers, the millions lapped it up; my copy of *MP 1960*, a paperback, is from an eleventh printing. The book also won a Pulitzer Prize. White produced three sequels. In the seventies, there was a hiccup: *MP 1972* was followed by *Breach of Faith*, a book about Watergate, and there was no *MP 1976*. Then, in 1982, White brought out *America in Search of Itself*, which covered the 1980 election and reviewed the territory the series, now a small shelf, had covered.

But *MP 1960* set White's tone. One characteristic of it was the lack of color. No more handkerchiefs soaked in Coke, no more gaudy neckties—at least, none that rouse interest or pleasure. Early in the book, White mentions a drunk in rural Wisconsin who wants John Kennedy to join him in a St. Patrick's Day toast, and late in the book he ponders the frenzies Kennedy induced in crowds. But it is all noted crisply, almost coolly, as if to say, the candidates and I have more important business to conduct.

The sense of importance (never self-importance, for White was a modest writer) lay behind another feature of White's new model: the weakness of his prose. At its best, it is competent. At its worst, it is padded and puffed, like a "March of Time" newsreel or an Eric Sevareid commentary. The most afflicted

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

book in the series in this regard was, curiously, the first.

> John F. Kennedy in his fourteen years in politics has had many servants, many aides, many helpers. As he has outgrown each level of operation, he has gently stripped off his earlier helpers and retained only those who could go with him effectively to the next level. These men here assembled were those who had survived a decade of Kennedy selection. . . . Kennedy, elegant in dress, in phrase, in manner, has always required quality work; these men by his standards were extraordinary; they were his choices.

The stiff-jointed inversion ("here assembled"), the parades of triplets ("many servants, many aides, many helpers") would stick gooily to a description of George Washington's cabinet, with Hamilton at Treasury and Jefferson at State. Applied to Ted Sorensen and Lou Harris, they are absurd.

A related vice is White's reluctance to think ill of anyone. In the case of the Kennedy family, it amounts to a blank refusal. John Kennedy was one of the greatest presidents in history, and Robert would have been as good, at least to hear White tell it. But other politicians constantly get the benefit of White's doubt. In five long books, he simply dismisses only two: Eugene "Bull" Connor and Adam Clayton Powell. White's will to admire makes for some strange reading in retrospect. Strangest of all, perhaps, is his running sketch of Richard Nixon. White not only welcomed the New Nixon; except for the fact that the man had opposed his hero, John F. Kennedy, he didn't have much trouble with the old one. But time has played tricks on many another genial White portrait. "[Gary] Hart," he wrote of McGovern's campaign manager in *MP 1972*, "drew the eyes of every yearning maiden in the McGovern camp for two years—except that he was too busy with politics for romantic distraction."

White aimed to be comprehensive. Anything that affected the process had to be covered. So we drop in on small meetings and monster rallies; we sample speeches, press releases, and internal memoranda; we make chapter-long excursions on race *(MP 1964)*, crime *(MP 1968)*, and the implications of the censuses of 1960, 1970, and 1980. But White seems happiest covering the smaller movements. The vox populi bellowing from the voting booth gave him pause—a curious trait in a man who covered politics, but there it was. The fall election, he says in *MP 1960*, is "a primitive and barbaric trial . . . as irrational as any of the murderous, or conspiratorial choices of leadership made elsewhere in great states." Primaries are no better: " . . . unknown men carve their mark; old men are sent relentlessly to their political graves; bosses and leaders may be humiliated or unseated." It sounds like the primal horde in *Totem and Taboo*. White offers this view of primaries as the opinion of professional pols and goes on in his own voice to say that primaries provide useful tests of political strength. But his heart, one feels, is with the pols.

Set against all these shortcomings was the primary virtue of the series: a coherent story. This was the secret of Teddy White's success, and the spur to his imitators. The story White spun in *MP 1960* was, indeed, altogether too coherent. The triumph of better over good, of elegance in dress, phrase, and manner over five o'clock shadow is too pat. There is something claustrophobic in so firm a fit between author's desire and history's verdict.

Things loosened up as the series progressed. The most Panglossian temperament could not have imposed tidiness on 1968. *MP 1972*, which went to press as Watergate began to unfold, is even more unbalanced. It opens with a view out a plane window of silt staining the South China Sea ("the Yangtze still flowed from the roof of Tibet") as White accompanies Nixon to China, and was plainly conceived as a story of a master of the world. It ends with Haldeman and Erlichman resigning, Mitchell under indictment. The tension, so far from being a weakness, makes the book much richer than it might have been had it come out six months earlier or a year later.

Another virtue was White's basic, almost unconscious honesty (JFK apart). The classicist Donald Kagan has observed that Thucydides, for all his genius, was not above ignoring inconvenient facts, while Herodotus, for all his naïveté, admitted contradictory evidence. White, unlike Thucydides, can be quoted against himself. His conclusions may be wrong; but the evidence for the actual truth is usually there lurking someplace. In *MP 1964*, for instance, White is wholly on Johnson's side, as against Goldwater. But the reader can't miss, even if White does, the megalomania suggested in White's own ac-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

count of such episodes as Johnson's choice of a running mate.

Post-White authors have dealt with his legacy in three ways. One way has been to hijack it—to become the "next Teddy White." Most of the big, comprehensive campaign books—Germond and Witcover's, Elizabeth Drew's—take this approach. Jules Witcover's *Marathon,* which he wrote, Germond-less, about the 1976 election (the first White failed to cover), can serve as an example of the rest.

The writing is sub-White throughout. A sure sign of failed invention is the inclusion of parody songs that reporters write on campaign planes. These are invariably dismal, the press at its smug and boring worst. In five books, White quoted one. *Marathon* quotes four. The only thing we are spared is an account of a Gridiron Dinner.

We might put up with it for the sake of good reporting, but this too is weak—surprisingly, since Witcover is industrious. What he fails to do is exercise any selectivity over the facts he assembles. Clarke Reed, a Mississippi Republican, tipped his state to Gerald Ford and thus played a crucial role in Ford's nomination and Ronald Reagan's defeat. But two whole chapters on Reed and his doings is a bit much. The book runs to nearly seven hundred pages—one hundred more than White's longest.

There are interesting tidbits scattered throughout, some with long shelf lives; Lloyd Bentsen wouldn't like page 163, and George Bush would hate page 504. But *Marathon* is notes for a book, rather than a book. It's what an experimental animal must be like after its brain has been removed: it goes through the motions, but it doesn't know why.

In 1968 and 1972, *Harper's* and *Rolling Stone* took a different tack. *Harper's* assigned the 1968 conventions to Norman Mailer, and *Rolling Stone* assigned the 1972 election to Hunter S. Thompson. The resulting books—*Miami and the Siege of Chicago* and *Fear and Loathing: On the Campaign Trail '72*—might be called anti-White.

They were called into being partly by politics. White was a liberal who did not hate Nixon, Humphrey, or America sufficiently; in fact, though he could show dismay or anger, he did not hate them at all, which was unacceptable to a certain sensibility. This sensibility found its perfect expression in the jacket of Thompson's book, which reproduced a poster with the Nixon slogan, "re-elect the president," under a red, white, and blue skull with swastikas in the eye sockets.

But the reaction against White was also stylistic. Color and rhythm returned, with a vengeance. Thompson writes, "I dragged myself back to the Rockies and tried to forget about politics for a while—just lie naked on the porch in the cool afternoon sun and watch the aspen trees turning gold on the hills around my house; mix up a huge cannister of gin and grapefruit juice, watch the horses nuzzling each other in the pasture across the road, big logs in the fireplace at night; Herbie Mann, John Prine, and Jesse Colin Young booming out of the speakers. . . ." This throwaway sentence of Thompson's flows more naturally than anything in all of *MP.*

Unfortunately, doing everything White didn't do isn't always good. The self-indulgence gets pretty suffocating. Mailer in Chicago goes on and on about a speech he will or won't give in Grant Park, as if anybody but his mother gave a damn. Thompson is so muddled, presumably from the drugs he says he took (though one suspects boasting), that he mangles his best anecdote, about the time he let a drunken hippie onto a Muskie campaign train with his press credentials. Thompson is the better reporter, getting a tangled story like the credentials fight at the Democratic convention right, though it takes him twenty-nine pages to explain what White in *MP 1972* covers in six. Mailer punts reporting altogether for the Big Insight. Many of these are silly, but some are golden. WASPs, he notes in one roomful of Republicans, "were here to serve, and serve they had in public functions and public charities . . . served on opera committees, and served in long hours of duty at the piano, served as the sentinel in concert halls and the pews on the aisle in church." Is there a better explanation of why the GOP, twenty years later, went for George Bush?

The third response to the White model is deconstruction: to prise a piece out of the mosaic and offer it up as the whole picture.

White had begun *MP 1960* with the inside story: meetings of three, five, and twelve politicians. After the 1984 election, two academics, Thomas Ferguson and Joel Rogers, took the inside story as far in as it could go. Their book on the Democratic half of that contest, *Right Turn,* expounded an "investment theory" according to which "the real

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

market for political parties" is not individual voters, but "major investors"—chiefly business firms, and whole industries. Behind the smoke-filled room, it turns out, is a smoke-filled boardroom. The book bristles with FEC data on campaign contributions, tracing executives and companies as they hop from candidate to candidate, trying to get the best return for their money. Lockheed went this-a-way, but Lazard Freres went that-a-way.

Ferguson and Rogers speak from the Left (they write for the *Nation).* But the Right produces similar analyses, with some of the same dramatis personae—the Council on Foreign Relations, the Trilateral Commission—and some all its own: chiefly, the sinister Colonel House. (Anyone who can't identify Colonel House must surrender all his back issues of the *Smoot Report).* Left and Right also share a common assumption: that the people "really" support our policies, and would vote for them if they had the chance, except that the parties that are supposedly on "our" side (Democrats for Ferguson and Rogers, Republicans for grass-eaters of the Right) are the witless pawns of business elites.

If the insider does not head for economic determinism, he can head for pop psych. Gail Sheehy's 1988 pre-campaign book, *Character,* epitomizes this sub-genre. *Character* is an anthology of the thumbnail bios White scattered through *MP,* only swollen to book length and shorn of politics. Who wins, and how they run, is of tertiary importance to Sheehy. "By the time they become national leaders, the candidates' character is sown. And if character is destiny, the history they reap will be our own."

God's gift to Sheehy and other sifters of souls was, of course, Gary Hart. It was Sheehy who broke the news in 1984 that Hart was the chum of a Comanche medicine woman. The Donna Rice episode three years later was manna. The best that can be said of her approach is that her reporting is as good as the *National Enquirer*'s.

The worst that can be said applies equally to Ferguson and Rogers: that neither the great-man theory of history nor the great-businessman theory is enough. The tycoon with his bank balance, Gary Hart with his id, appearing on the stage and playing out their assigned parts, do not leave room for activities that we believe politicians and voters do perform, at least sometimes: choosing, for instance; or thinking.

A more profitable variety of deconstruction are books analyzing the role of media and media manipulation. *MP 1960* covered the first televised presidential debates; *America in Search of Itself* had a chapter entitled "The Reign of Television." Joe McGinniss's *Selling of the President 1968* was an entire book devoted to Richard Nixon's image-makers. Eight years later, in *PR as in President,* Vic Gold considered the state of the art of flackery in both parties.

Tonally, the books are poles apart. McGinniss is a minimalist, paying out the exact amount of rope that will enable his subjects to hang themselves. Gold is a stand-up comic, spritzing anecdotes, vignettes, chats with minor players. Their analyses, though, are similar, and grim. Nixon, in 1968, was marketed like cigarettes—McGinniss's jacket shows Nixon's face on a cigarette pack—while Gold calls 1976 "the most public relations-oriented presidential campaign in history."

The Selling of the President 1968 may have been the most influential campaign book outside the White canon. All the stranger, therefore, that no one seems to have understood it. Culturally, McGinniss rode the same wave of revulsion that floated Mailer and Thompson. What people thought he was saying was that the evil Nixon stole the election by occult means. The moral in McGinniss and Gold, though, is actually quite different. Their subject is not the power of campaign media men, but their impotence and incompetence. McGinniss records Nixon's enormous post-convention lead melting away as his image-makers look on helplessly. Gold presents this home-stretch pastiche:

"We have Dick Scammon here."... "We have Lou Harris here." ... "Too close to call."... SLIGHT EDGE TO CARTER ... *The Mini Page*: WHO WILL BE THE NEXT PRESIDENT'S DAUGHTER? AMY OR SUSAN? ... "momentummomentummoMENTUMMOMENTUMMOME ..."

Apathy.

The media is the material on which the campaign image-makers claim to work their magic. But the media, in its news divisions, is supposed to be a watchdog, a guardian of the purity of the process. How well does it do its job? McGinniss doesn't have much to say about the media; Gold has a lot. After the 1980

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

election, Jeff Greenfield devoted a book to the subject, *The Real Campaign*, which covers the election by reproducing what other journalists said about it as it was happening. The irony of the book is that Greenfield believes they invariably said the wrong things. "From the surface of 1980—which is where the mass media positioned itself most of the time—the election was a disjointed, dispiriting contest." But "all through 1980—and indeed, for years before—*a real campaign* had been taking place," the outcome of which would have been the same *"even if it had taken place long before the invention of television."* The real campaign, Greenfield argues, turned on old-fashioned issues and factors: party unity, party financing, the state of the economy.

Was the election decided wisely? Greenfield does not say, but since he is a liberal Democrat, we may assume that, in an ideal world, he could have suggested improvements in the result. But, unlike Ferguson and Rogers, he does not make faces at businessmen who did him out of his birthright. Instead he tells his side—or anyone's side, for the advice is non-partisan—that you can hope to win only if you get your act together. Your record and your luck must do the rest.

The Real Campaign is not very well written (it's hard to imagine how such a book, which consists of reporting on reporting, could be). Greenfield is more interested in making his point. The fact that real campaigns go on, despite the media's indifference to them, is not quite good enough for him. "Superficial . . . coverage of a Presidential campaign cannot be said to prevent citizens from exercising an intelligent choice about their vote. What it *does* do is force the choice into a private realm . . . in which each voter tends to grope for answers in the dark, unable to find a common forum for debate and discussion. . . ." If, Greenfield concludes, in future campaigns, "the press attempts to explore the underlying political events" it might bring "Americans closer to the process that shapes our country" and give them "a reason to care." That was two campaigns ago.

I managed to go through the 1988 election without mishap. Not my wife. I found myself, in Atlanta during the Democratic convention, assigned to a sort of brass-and-marble barracks for traveling executives, which gleamed in a belt of secondary corporate headquart[illegible] miles from town. No cabs cruised there, and I took a twenty-five-dollar limousine ride to get anywhere in particular. The place didn't even have a newsstand, much less aspirin. Tuesday morning I was summoned from my pleasure dome by a distress call from home. I gave my credentials to a courtly old gentleman from New Hampshire, who had come down armed only with a letter from the editor of *Yankee* magazine (there was little danger of his behaving like Hunter Thompson's hippie). He was a lifelong Democrat who simply wanted to see the process in action firsthand. I trust he enjoyed himself.

So I watched the rest of the revels in my living room, on C-SPAN. It was an even trade. I lost the immediacy of the floor hoopla, which, so long as high school bands are permitted to perform along with the canned music, is still a page out of Charles Ives, and I missed three nights of signs. On the other hand, I was spared the temptation to trade misinformation with my colleagues.

How did writing about presidential elections go off the rails?

Though it seems patricidal to say so, Theodore White gave the first push. White discovered the subject, but he also subtly misdescribed what he had found. Proud to have traced down the meetings of three and five and twelve, he gave them disproportionate weight. The danger, for him, was seduction—the feeling that the insiders to whom he had access were worthy of their positions, simply by virtue of the fact that they occupied them. In the case of the Kennedy family, he succumbed completely, becoming an attendant lord that did, to swell a progress, start a scene or two. The danger for most of his followers (Witcover solo, Germond and Witcover, Elizabeth Drew) has been another kind of seduction, not by the insiders themselves—the journalistic attitude toward them being cool, not to say contemptuous—but by their words. If they say something—that an event occurred, that a trend is developing—write it down. The result: the huge, logorrheic volumes, shapely as trash bags, and about as fresh. The lucky hits of passing literary gents have not been enough to reform the genre. Norman Mailer, perhaps realizing this, went back after 1968 to fiction and non-political faction. Hunter

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

izing it, continues to write
er dreariness.
hink, was right to say that,
l the politicians are hob-
this kind of reporting, they are not absolutely immobilized. Real campaigns—in which politicians present themselves, and voters make considered, if not necessarily wise, choices—do go on. The people who are most hurt by wrongheaded writing are the writers themselves. As they become more absorbed in the inner maneuverings their sources tell them about, they come to speak a hermetic language, comprehensible only to initiates. They join the inside-baseball team.

No one's perfect. I must confess that, in covering the 1988 election, I was briefly bemused by Paul Simon. I knew from day one, however, that Bob Dole had no prospects. I achieved this insight by a mysterious means. I went up to New Hampshire one afternoon in the fall of 1987 and listened to him speak. Since he said nothing, and since nothing can come of nothing, I concluded he was going nowhere. This judgment, too, might have turned out to be mistaken. But it was a lot likelier to be true than anything I might have learned from talking, on or off the record, with Bill Brock.

The way to sanity leads through Joe McGinniss and Vic Gold, and their demonstrations of the worthlessness of almost all of what the flacks and the spin doctors say, and the press gravely copies down. When the murk is stripped away, what remains?

Presidential elections, it turns out, are conversations. They might not fit into a Henry Adams novel, but they are conversations nonetheless. Someone pays for a sign about industrial upheaval (WE CAN'T ALL BE COMPUTER PROGRAMMERS, it might say). Someone else gives a speech addressing the point—not, to be sure, as a result of the sign; perhaps because of a prior understanding with the sign's purchaser. People like what they hear, or they dislike it; or maybe they're listening to something else. Inside baseball, it turns out, is not a content-free art form. The machinations of the meetings of three, five, and twelve succeed or fail depending on the reaction of the entire cast of characters—which, finally, includes the voters. The fit between their wants, thoughts, and beliefs, and the deeds and words of politicians, determines the outcome.

Attending to this conversation requires a certain passivity in reporting. People who write about an election have to be willing to trust their subject a little more—to sit back, and let the pols talk; to observe what they say or do in public, rather than what their hangers-on plot in private. Man-in-the-street interviews will continue; so will polling, so long as it's taken with a grain of salt. The background briefing, the chats with "sources close to," the never-before-revealed (except to fifty other reporters) scoop should get a rest.

At the same time, political writers have to be more active in their thinking. The well-written campaign book should be aware of ideology. Americans don't like the word, because it conjures up systems of witless do's and don'ts. Ideology can be that. But at its broadest, it is simply the way we think about the world. What we think determines what we do—how we run a presidential campaign; how we pull a lever in a voting booth.

And the style? Style is temperament; every author skillful enough to have a style will have his own. What I would like to read is a style that is simultaneously vivid and smooth; amused, without being bilious; respectful of its subject, without being solemn; that can catch the jangle of a minute, as well as the hum of history. Readers would care about a campaign book that did so; and about its subject.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Limitations of Liberalism

ELIE KEDOURIE

In the English language the word *liberal* is, in some of its meanings, an adjective of commendation. To be liberal is to be free from narrow prejudice or bigotry. It is also to be free "from unreasonable prejudice in favor of traditional opinions or established institutions," and it is to be "open to the reception of new ideas or proposals for reform." These definitions, taken from the *Oxford English Dictionary*, show with great clarity how the word, from indicating an aspect of an individual's character—namely, absence of narrowness and bigotry—came to embody a political and social outlook, one that is not partial to traditional opinions or established institutions; one that is, on the contrary, receptive to new, reforming ideas.

That these two meanings of the word became conflated or mingled with one another, so much so that to be a liberal in social and political affairs came ipso facto to signify being a friend of humanity, did not happen by accident. Rather, complicated reasonings and involved doctrines—reasonings and doctrines not necessarily fully coherent with one another—annexed to themselves an adjective with established and well-understood laudatory connotations, and managed to imbue it with implications hinting at a whole philosophy of history and politics. We see these implications, for instance, in a statement by John Stuart Mill from 1865 in which he asserted that a Liberal is he who looks forward, while a Tory looks backward.

To look forward to increasing amelioration, to greater sweetness and light, became the promise of Liberalism, and of a political party that in the name of Liberalism sought, and did succeed at times in gaining, electoral support. In British politics, the Liberal party—originally an amalgam of Whigs, Peelites, and Radicals—has now disappeared in yet another amalgam with the Social Democratic Party, but even when it was still in existence it had long ceased not only to hope for power, but even to represent a distinctive political stance or attitude. Its heyday was in the last two decades of the nineteenth century, and its last great triumph was the electoral victory of 1905. It was during its period in office that the First World War broke out, and it was under its aegis that the British Empire became engulfed in a conflict that nothing in Liberal doctrine would have led one to expect. But even before this catastrophe—which was utterly inexplicable in Liberal terms—Liberals in power found it extremely difficult to reconcile their aspirations and expectations with what a Liberal administration found itself compelled to do. We see an eminent Liberal, Josiah Wedgwood, M.P., lamenting in 1911 that "if you look to any part of the world where there have been difficulties in the last six years I think you will find it difficult to lay your finger upon one spot . . . from China to Peru, where the influence of the Liberal Government has made anything better or influenced things in the slightest degree in a liberal direction."

In the same debate in the House of Commons in which Wedgwood uttered these lamentations, the foreign secretary, Sir Edward Grey, had to confess that Great Britain, Liberalism notwithstanding, had to tread to the barbarous clangor of a gong. "The ideal of splendid isolation," he said, "contemplated a

✪ ELIE KEDOURIE, professor of politics at the London School of Economics, is the author of *Islam and the Modern World* and *The Crossman Confessions and Other Essays in Politics, History and Religion.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

balance of power in Europe to which we were not to be a party, and from which we were to be able to stand aside in the happy position of having no obligations. . . . That policy is not a possible one now." In the mid-nineteen thirties, the eminent Liberal, Francis Hirst, erstwhile editor of *The Economist*, confessed in sad bewilderment that exactly the contrary of what Liberalism had promised and looked forward to was now taking place, not in primitive and barbarous countries, but in the very center of civilization:

> Two centuries of emancipation [he lamented] have been followed by two decades of reaction. In several great and small countries free institutions have been trampled underfoot; criticism has been stifled; the press has been enslaved; trade has been trammelled by innumerable restrictions, and whole nations are being deprived of their economic liberties as well as of their rights.

It is the oldest wisdom that there is always likely to be a gap between the dream and the reality and that such a contingency must be expected and allowed for. What is remarkable about a doctrine such as Liberalism is that it offers not the slightest intimation that such a gap is likely to be encountered. On the contrary, the discourse of Liberalism is bent on denying that such a gap could possibly exist. Hence the consistent minds who have devised the doctrine fall into inconsistencies when they desire to rule the present and shape the future.

At the heart of Liberalism, then, there is a ruinous incoherence. And the incoherence stems from the very notion of man that Liberalism, in its different versions, entertains. The idea of the individual as the fundamental, primordial element in society and politics can be said to be a European seventeenth-century invention. This individual—along with his fellow individuals—is a sovereign, a king, to use Locke's description. It cannot, however, be supposed that this individual emerged fully fledged from the minds of philosophers. Rather, before and along with the theorizing of this individual, we see in Western society the spread—whatever its reason—of an ideal in which men and women increasingly look upon themselves as foci of independent judgment, final arbiters from whose verdicts there is no further appeal, alike in their preferences and aversions, and in their notions of right and wrong. The theorizing of this ideal issues in the philosophical abstraction known as the individual—and on this abstraction Liberalism is erected.

How is this individual to be described, and his characteristics specified? One way of doing this is to borrow from seventeenth-century physics and extend the application of its categories from the inanimate to the human. In a universe made up of atoms whirling haphazardly and pushing, and colliding with, one another, man is but another collection of atoms subject everywhere to the same physical laws discovered by the hypothetico-deductive method. What the method discloses is that the individual is primarily a creature of sensations, always and everywhere under two sovereign masters, pain and pleasure. If all men are equally under such domination, then one man's pleasure or his pain cannot be put above or below another man's pain or pleasure. All men, it must follow, are equal. Pain and pleasure are internal individual sensations, hence it follows that each man is the best judge of what he has to do in the endless, unremitting pursuit of a maximum of happiness—the happiness that St. Just said was a new idea in Europe. The optimum condition to which men can aspire is the greatest happiness of the greatest number. Given that an individual's pleasure or happiness—and the two are synonymous—is exactly on a par with that of every other individual, and that each individual is the best judge of his own interest (which is to maximize his own happiness), society will not attain optimum happiness, the maximum of pleasure, unless each man is to count as one and no more than one. Liberalism starts from this conclusion.

But this view of human nature is highly unsatisfactory. There is nothing obvious or sure about the felicific calculus; and individuals are not so many separate pleasure-maximizing units. But what is pleasure, what is pain? In the universe of the Marquis de Sade—the ultimate conclusion of the pain-pleasure analysis—pain is pleasure and pleasure is pain.

Men, in any case, are not solitary pleasure- and pain-computing machines. Rather they are bound by all kinds of ties to an imagined past, and a projected future: to family, neighbors, friends, and associates. And all of these ties will get in the way of, interfere with, the correct scientific computation by each sover-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

eign individual of the various sums of pleasure and pain that he experiences or anticipates. This theory, and the Liberalism erected upon it, gives a curiously unidimensional impression of the human story. In this account, history plays no tricks. It is a plain, flat to the horizon, on which a track, a single track, is being laid. There are no volcanoes, and certainly no irruptions. "They asked themselves," wrote Lord Esher of Liberals, "every question except the most fundamental of all. With the result that there was very little joyousness in them." This incurious rigidity the poet Yeats perceived when he asked:

> . . . but what is Whiggery?
> A levelling, rancorous, rational sort of mind
> That never looked out of the eye of a saint
> Or out of drunkard's eye.

The endless dialogue between a man and himself, the whisper of ambition, will locked in contest with will, not for any object in particular, but so that will may triumph, the weariness that comes suddenly, ill will slowly fermenting in obscure provinces—on these things Liberalism has perforce to be mute.

But on many other things it is not mute. On the contrary, if men are equal in their susceptibility to pain and pleasure, then it follows that the government of these pleasure-maximizing individuals must follow the rule of one man, one vote. Government is obviously necessary in order to enforce and deter, and rulers who, like all individuals, also wish to maximize their pleasure, may be tempted to abuse their power. If so, they will constitute a sinister interest, inimical to that of the majority who are subject to their power. The only efficient restraint under modern conditions is that exercised by a representative assembly representing and acting on behalf of all individuals, who choose the members of the assembly by voting, each voter counting as one and no more than one.

However, even in societies where the ideal of the sovereign individual has flourished, "one man, one vote" cannot explain or account for what goes on in the world of politics—a world manifestly not one in which pleasure-seeking and pain-avoiding strangers, keeping one another at arm's length, engage in transactions the sole aim of which is to obtain the greatest amount of pleasure. On the contrary, political representation, political leadership, the constitutional and legal order are so complex in their origin and functioning that no theory like that of "one man, one vote" can account for them, and no single ideal, such as that of individualism, can override their peculiar mode of operation.

To say "one man, one vote" is immediately to assume the existence of voting. Voting is for the purpose of electing someone to represent the elector in a representative assembly. The idea of representation, without which "one man, one vote" is unintelligible, is a medieval Western invention that led, without anyone planning it, to the characteristic Western political device of parliamentary government. In the fashioning of the idea of representation, which was a response to the needs of both church and secular government, the question arose as to the circumstances in which the decisions of representative assemblies could be held to be binding, both on those who took them and on those whom they represented. To start with, it was argued that what touches all must be approved by all. But this was seen in due course to be unwieldy and unworkable. Another rule replaced it—namely, that a majority decision binds the whole. The rule was justified by the argument that what the larger part of a group agrees upon must embody the consensual wisdom of the group. Representation and majority henceforth are inextricably connected.

But these two ideas do not entail or require the principle of "one man, one vote." On the contrary, at its beginnings and until modern times, representation was understood to be the representation of groups: corporations, estates, "nations" in the medieval sense of the term. And it can be argued that this manner of representation is, so to speak, more representative of society, and of the variety of interests that co-exist in any society, than representation on the basis of "one man, one vote."

Decisions by majority vote are workable only on condition that majorities and minorities are variable, not permanent, that a majority in favor of one decision is differently composed from the majority in favor of another decision. If, as in the case of so-called plural societies, majorities and minorities are—as most frequently happens—perpetual, then "one man, one vote" becomes a device for the perpetual oppression of the minority

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

by the majority. "One man, one vote," the child of Liberal political science, may maximize the pleasure of a majority, but destroys that of a minority. The calculus adequate to such a situation has not yet been invented. But "one man, one vote" issues in something even more paradoxical. Even if a state is free from ethnic or religious divisions, "one man, one vote" can still lead to unrestrained tyranny. This is the case in the communist world, where "one man, one vote" is said to be the visible expression of popular sovereignty. It is also the case in Third World states, for reasons that are not particularly mysterious. The theory of "one man, one vote" is, as we have said, defective and unsatisfactory both in its picture of individual conduct and of social ties and groupings. If in Western countries, "one man, one vote" has not issued in tyranny or anarchy, this is because social groupings and interests are of such variety and power that it is very difficult, not to say impossible, either for a government or any one single group to ride roughshod over society at large. Behind the language of "one man, one vote," then, there lies the abiding reality of organized groups and their interests. Between them there is constant rivalry and contention that establishes some rough-and-ready, constantly shifting, balance of power—the sovereign preservative against oppression. Where social groups are feeble or unarticulated, "one man, one vote" simply becomes a screen behind which a so-called single party or *nomenklatura* can systematically and without check extend its control over a collection of scattered and isolated individuals, each one of whom comes, at stated times, to lay down the offering of his vote at the feet of those who claim to speak for him. This describes the political condition of the communist world and of most of Asia and Africa. "One man, one vote" here brings about the greatest unhappiness of the greatest number.

A theory such as this, then, cannot satisfactorily give an account of human experience as it molds, and is molded by, the concrete personality. In the political science of Liberalism, politics as a practical activity is lost to view. The habitual exercise of power, the habitual obedience to it or the absence of such a habit, neighborliness, affection and their contraries, partiality and prejudice, trust and mistrust, the restraint imposed by good manners, the excesses associated with an absence of decorum—matters such as these, the outcome of a lifelong commerce between heart and head and their mutual education, and which an adequate account of political experience ought to cover, must go by default in this theory of politics. In this theory, issues between men must admit of solutions: right solutions can be discovered to be right and wrong solutions to be wrong on the basis of universal and immutable principles. If the solutions nonetheless somehow fail, this is because an imperfect world—which we can nevertheless strive to perfect—will not allow them to take effect. The ideals of the United Nations, for instance, are often said to be fine but unfortunately impracticable only because of the imperfections of the world. But the disrepute into which these ideals have fallen must not be laid at the door of the world. The world is what it has always been, and the impotence of these ideals is rather a symptom of the universality they claim. They attempt to codify for the whole world a tradition that is the outcome of one local and particular political experience, and Liberal political writing thus easily degenerates into empty slogans and shibboleths.

Yet another aspect of Liberalism—which may help to account for its ineffectuality both as explanation and as a political guide—is its view of rational conduct. This view is encapsulated, articulated, and defended in J. S. Mill's tract *On Liberty*. On such a view, rationality is at the opposite extreme from custom. Custom is prejudice, and prejudice is worthless even though the prejudice may, unbeknown to itself, embody or contain the truth. Prejudice is worthless because what it embodies or recommends is unexamined. A critical rationality is incumbent on the rational man, because "the only way in which a human being can make some approach to knowing the whole of a subject, is by hearing what can be said about it by persons of every variety of opinion, and studying all modes in which it can be looked at by every character of mind." J. S. Mill's ideal universe is populated by individuals continuously practicing what he calls negative logic, spending the whole of their lives in a kind of improved and modernized medieval disputation. In such a mode of life the highest achievement, which guarantees both liberty and progress, is to be an eccentric endowed with the strength of mind and character to subject every thought and

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

action to perpetual scrutiny, and to prize, above all, originality as the "most valuable element in human affairs." It is original minds that "discover new truths and point out when what were once truths are true no longer," and which are able to commence new practices, and set the example of more enlightened conduct, and better taste and sense in human life." In this view of things—which is an abiding one in Liberalism—good politics is one that is based on the continuous search for the truth. As Karl Popper argued, a closed society, with all its tyrannies and oppressions, is one that submits to magic, while an open society is one in which the critical powers of man are set free.

All this is based on a confusion, and proceeds on an optimistic view of the irresistible power of the truth, which our experience does not justify. This baseless optimism may be dismissed in the mocking words of the poet Coventry Patmore:

> When all its work is done, the lie shall rot;
> The truth is great and shall prevail,
> When none care whether it prevail or not.

The confusion underlying J. S. Mill's and Popper's position is between the search for truth and the operations of government. The search for truth, as this goes on, say, in universities, is one that is carried on—must be carried on—for its own sake. You start with a question, a puzzle, an obscurity, and in seeking to answer the question, to resolve the puzzle, to make obscurity transparent, you may be led through highways and byways to a destination you had never dreamed existed, a destination which, barely reached, may prove to be illusory, and so on ad infinitum. Government and politics cannot possibly be carried on in this way. The business of government is to maintain society, to protect it against foreign assault, and to uphold the law. It has to act here and now, and has no leisure to wait upon the (always doubtful, provisional, and generally irrelevant) ascertaining of the truth. James Mill, who shared some of his son's prejudices—if the expression be allowed—declared with the same touching hopefulness that if "all opinions, both true and false, are equally declared, the assent of the greater number, . . . may always be expected to be given to the true." But James Mill had a qualification that indeed goes to the heart of the matter: the assent of the greater number is given to the true "when their interests are not opposed to them." Interests, to mediate between which is the affair of politics, are neither true nor false. The truth becomes a political affair when a priesthood or a clerisy becomes a government and makes it its business to establish truth and enlightenment. Here, too, then, the Liberal discourse leads to an unexpected conclusion that negates the Liberal aspiration.

The individual, we have said, is sovereign. He is a king. He is a king not simply in respect of his tastes and preferences, his right to a maximum of pleasure. He is also a sovereign in regard to judgments of right and wrong. Or rather, not he, but his conscience is the final arbiter of right and wrong. The appeal to conscience is another great theme of Liberalism. This appeal is grounded on an account of the moral life that Kant articulated. The individual is an autonomous, self-legislating moral being who obeys the categorical imperative that his conscience, the conscience of every individual, dictates. Freedom for this moral being is obedience to the categorical imperative. How to link this ethical theory with politics, and what is the outcome of the linkage? In *Perpetual Peace* Kant declared that a republic properly speaking comes into existence only when all its members behave in accordance with the categorical imperative. Their will is, then, ipso facto, free and good. In such a society "the freedom of your will is compatible with the freedom of everyone according to a universal law." Such freedom is incompatible with force. Force, however, is a characteristic of existing politics.

If the ideal is as Kant describes, then government here and now must, as T. H. Green put it, maintain conditions of life in which morality shall be possible—"morality consisting in the disinterested performance of self-imposed duty." To maintain such conditions and ensure the disinterested performance of self-imposed duty requires government to establish and maintain a constant separation between what an individual's interest inclines him to and what morality imposes on him. There must be a constant separation between inclination and duty. "If the surface be ill-prepared," wrote J. L. Hammond, "you may stamp upon it impressions of civic free-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

dom and civic duty, and they will not survive tomorrow; order well your groundwork, and you need not fear that even the potent lye of material interests will wash out the fast-dyed print of reverence for free and equal law."

The picture here is of a Manichean universe in which there is constant struggle between light and dark, between material interest and reverence for law. The incompatibility between the two assumed here again denies any intercourse between heart and head, between principle and experience. Family connections are sinister connections, material interests weaken rather than consolidate social bonds; they cannot be dykes against excess, they may not, anywhere or in any case, promote scrupulousness, regard, and kindliness between men. Peaceableness, generosity, virtue are solely the outcome of reverence for law, of obedience to the categorical imperative. In this bleak, self-divided universe, the exercise of free will has to be continuously and minutely enforced. Fichte's *Closed Commercial State* is a working out of what has to be done by way of minute continuous control and regulation in trying to bring about a state of affairs in which all action is in obedience to the categorical imperative.

This appeal to conscience, as Hegel well saw, is in the end an appeal not so much to an unknown god as to an empty shrine. The appeal to conscience pure and simple is paradoxical and guarantees nothing. As Hegel says, conscience is "subject to the judgment of its truth and falsity, and when it appeals only to itself for a decision, it is directly at variance with what it wishes to be—namely the rule for a mode of conduct which is rational, absolutely valid and universal." As Hegel goes on to point out, "To have a conscience, if conscience is only formal subjectivity, is simply to be on the verge of slipping into evil; in independent self-certainty, with its independence of knowledge and decision, both morality and evil have their common root." If the goodness of the will consists in its willing the good, action is justified by pleading the imperative of duty, and of good intentions. Since the categorical imperative is in the end what an individual conscience inspires, and since nothing else exists that may prescribe the objective content of this imperative, then evil can be transmuted into good, and good into evil. The outcome of such a dialectic is the nihilism that has played so powerful a role in the drama of the modern Western consciousness. This certainly is not what Liberalism, the upholder, the champion, of the claims of private conscience, ever expected.

Small Birthday Poem

MARY KINZIE

Foggy and dark, this birthday you're
No different than you were when,
Not halfway home, at twenty-four,
You turned my head, Strong as a wave
Stubborn with light; equable; brave;—
Qualities that move me now much more
Than when their force diminished other men.

MARY KINZIE is the author of *The Threshold of the Year and the forthcoming Masked Women.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

MEMOIR

The Emperor Wore Clothes

Visiting Haile Selassie in 1943

HAROLD COURLANDER

I have told this narrative, usually in parts, on a number of occasions, but as time passes I discover that those who once heard it retell it in distorted form or don't remember it at all. It is about an unexpected and serendipitous visit I made in 1943 with a friend, Gordon MacCreagh, to Addis Ababa, where we had two meetings with Emperor Haile Selassie. The Emperor was once again in Ethiopia after six years of exile during the Italian occupation of the country.

I was stationed at the Gura airfield in Eritrea, officially known by the mysterious-sounding name "Project 19," staffed mainly with civilians brought together by the Douglas Aircraft Company and operating under the Air Transport Command. The field was a servicing facility for United States and Allied aircraft and a refueling stop for U.S.–made bombers being flown across North Africa to the Soviet Union. I had signed on for stock work in the hangars, but some months after arriving I found myself to be the project historian. (The government-Douglas contract required such a post.) Though I had visited many surrounding villages and small towns, I had never managed to get to Addis Ababa, the Ethiopian capital. That I eventually did so was due to the ingenuity of Gordon MacCreagh.

✪ HAROLD COURLANDER is a novelist and a specialist in the oral literature of various non-Western cultures. He is the author of many books dealing with African, Caribbean, and Native American traditions. Among his fictional works are *The African* and *The Master of the Forge*, and his book *The Drum and the Hoe* is a standard reference on the life and lore of the Haitian people.

Gordon was fifty-five or fifty-six years old at the time and claimed he would never have been there at all except that he'd knocked twelve years off his age when he applied for a job with the project. He was American born but had spent most of his school years with his grandparents' family in Scotland, to which he had a strong sentimental allegiance. His most prized possession was a bagpipe, which was lost at sea on the way to Eritrea. Later he was able to procure another set of pipes in Cairo, but when he tried to play it in our barrack he was evicted. Thereafter, whenever the urge overtook him, he went out at dark among the rocks at the edge of camp and piped to his heart's content. It was an eerie sound at night. Some men declared it kept the hyenas away.

Gordon was spellbinding when telling of his exploits and adventures on various continents and archipelagoes. He had been a regular contributor to *Adventure Magazine*, and had also written a number of books about his experiences in far-off places. I always accepted much of it as true, but believe that he improvised and invented copiously when narrating certain breathtaking happenings in South America, India, Tibet, Africa, and Borneo, though it really didn't matter to anyone.

His hobby was "beating the system," whatever it happened to be. Systems were a challenge to him. For example, he was very put out that when he was buying supplies in the States for the Eritrean trip he had to turn in empty tubes in order to purchase toothpaste and shaving cream. He didn't have the empty tubes and had to buy them from someone else. So in our barrack he haunted the lavatory, picking up empty tubes that had been left

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

there, intending that when he went home he would sell them at a fancy price to all those unfortunates who didn't own empty tubes. By the time he left he had about forty pounds of tubes in his footlocker, but, as it turned out, empties were no longer required at American drugstores.

Most of the yarns he told, whether true or embellished, are no doubt somewhere in his writings, so it would be redundant to mention them in this memoir. But I can't pass up the opportunity to tell about one night when we were on the town in Asmara. Five or six of us had an Italian dinner somewhere and then wandered about looking for something to happen. Asmara was pretty dead at night unless you happened to know where to go, and the only events we encountered in the streets were some brawls between American G.I.'s and Aussies. (The Aussies had resented being called Limeys—that is, English.) For reasons unexplained, Gordon had brought his bagpipe along. Possibly he had thought of walking up and down the main street piping some clan's call to arms.

We came to the building that once had been the Italian governor's palace and now was converted into the British Officers' Club. We entered and browsed through the palatial rooms. It was pretty dead there, too, except for the bar. Then we passed the dining room, where a number of officers were eating. Gordon said suddenly, "Let's go," and began piping what he later said was a MacGregor air. Spontaneously we formed a line behind him and marched wherever he led, zigzagging this way and that among the tables. A British captain who was eating alone jumped up and attached himself to the procession. Then another. It was all very gay and brought life to the dull and overly decorous scene. At the far end of the room a general and a colonel were dining together. They were somewhat astonished by what was occurring, but observed it all rather sedately.

As we approached their table, Gordon changed the tune (though I don't think most of us could tell the difference) to "The Wearing of the Green." The general and the colonel were not amused. Their faces flushed and the veins of their necks swelled. When the two officers who had joined the march realized what had happened they dropped back and slunk to their tables. One more round of the dining room, out the door, then we were in the street. It was enough for most of us, but Gordon kept going up and down the street until his wind failed. He was quite pleased with having been, probably, the only person to have piped the Irish revolutionary tune for a British general.

One evening Gordon burst into our barrack breathlessly and reported that he'd just had a chance meeting at the airstrip with the Ethiopian foreign minister, Blatta (his title) Ephrem Towolde Medhen, whose plane from Cairo had set down for refueling. Now, one of Gordon's unquestionably true adventures had been to run a consignment of guns to the Ethiopians during the early stages of the Italian war. How he did it and from what starting point I never knew. Possibly it was from Khartoum across the Sudan border. Whatever the details, he had received a decoration from Haile Selassie for that accomplishment, and he carried a copy of his citation, signed by the Emperor, among his personal belongings. Minister Medhen either knew Gordon personally or knew something about him.

Gordon told him that the two of us might be useful to the Ethiopian government in certain ways and that we would be glad to come to Addis Ababa for a meeting with the Emperor or anyone he might designate. Medhen stressed that educational matters were his country's priority, and Gordon mentioned that I had contacts with various American foundations and educational institutions. Medhen promised to talk to Selassie about it at the first opportunity. Gordon's own expertise and main interest were elsewhere. He proposed to talk about the building of a Blue Nile dam at Lake Tana, a project that had been seriously discussed for years. I believe he had actually done some MacCreagh-style lobbying for it in the United States before the war.

I didn't really expect anything much to come of Medhen's promise, and after a while Gordon's optimism began to fade. But a few weeks later we received a message from the depot commander, Colonel Harry Bishop, that he wanted to see us. We hurried to his office, and he told us that he had just received a request from Minister Medhen that the two of us be sent to Addis Ababa to confer with the Emperor. The message read, "His Majesty Haile Selassie, Emperor of Ethiopia, requests. . . ." We were to be at the runway at four o'clock the next morning; the base's meteorological plane would then fly us to Addis

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Ababa, where we would stay overnight and be flown back the following day.

My clothing situation was not very good, so I spent that evening frantically looking for a suit I could buy or borrow. Finally, I found someone in the barrack next door who had a nice gabardine suit he wanted to dispose of. It was almost new, but he'd had an unhappy love affair with an Italian girl in Asmara and wanted to get rid of everything that reminded him of her. I bought the suit for twenty-five dollars, a marvelous bargain, and felt that I was as prepared as I ever would be to visit the Emperor.

It wasn't until I dressed at three in the morning that I became fully aware that there was a size problem with the suit. The fellow who sold it to me was about six-feet tall and weighed about one hundred and eighty pounds, whereas I was several inches shorter and weighed about one hundred and fifty pounds. The pants went on easily, but I had to pull them well above my hips to keep the cuffs from scuffing along the ground. Unfortunately it was next to impossible to keep them there. The jacket was correspondingly large; if I let it just hang, only my fingers showed through the sleeves. But I had no alternative. I carried the jacket along with my musette bag, tugging my pants up at frequent intervals.

The plane was warmed up and ready to go, and we climbed aboard. There were four men in the meteorological crew and another passenger, an engine mechanic, who was to be dropped off at Aden, which was east of Gura rather than south toward Addis Ababa. We'd had no breakfast, and so I ate a chocolate bar I'd had the foresight to stuff in my musette bag. Somewhere enroute to Aden we crossed a desert and saw the ruins of numerous villages dating back to a period when the area had been at least marginally fertile. At some point we passed over a cluster of dead volcanoes, which would have been merely interesting if our meteorologically minded pilot hadn't felt the urge to investigate them at close range. He took the plane down in a steep bank and circled the volcanoes' rims. These maneuvers didn't agree with me, and the heat and the chocolate bar didn't help. When we landed at the Aden airstrip, the temperature was around 140 degrees Fahrenheit, and that didn't help either. We were on the ground about half an hour and then took off for Addis Ababa. My stomach was increasingly uncomfortable. About an hour later I knew I had lost the battle. I signaled to one of the crew with my hands, and he pointed to a little curtain hanging over a tiny space at the very tail end of the plane. I dived frantically through the curtain and lay there about fifteen minutes with my head inside a large pail, the only sanitary facility aboard. I finally made my way unsteadily back to my seat, walking on the cuffs of my pants.

When we deplaned at the Addis Ababa airfield, I was feeling a bit better, but according to Gordon, my complexion was still green. However, I was beginning to remember to give my belt a hitch upward every so often. An open car came careening across the field and two young Americans jumped out. One of them addressed me with great deference, asking, "Are you the new American ambassador, sir?" I assured him (which was not difficult) that I was not, but that Gordon and I were on our way to see Foreign Minister Ephrem Towolde Medhen. They offered to drive us. Our pilot asked us to report back to the plane at seven in the evening to make sure of our departure time the next day.

We arrived at Medhen's house about two o'clock. When we told him we would probably have to leave the following morning, he became somewhat agitated. The Emperor had made it clear that he wanted to see us, but our timing was not good. The Emperor regularly napped in the afternoon. Medhen could take us to the palace immediately and have the Emperor awakened, an option that made him nervous. But if he did not get us there while we were available, there could be unpleasant consequences for him. He decided to go with the first option. We washed up and he took us immediately to the palace. He brought us to the anteroom of Selassie's office and disappeared to face whatever reception he might get from the Emperor.

We waited quite a while, during which time Gordon advised me about the protocol of meeting and talking to the Emperor, something he knew from previous personal experience. He made it quite clear that on entering the room one should take one step forward, then incline one's head, another step forward, incline the head again, and so on. After a pause, he said, "But of course we're Americans, and no one expects Americans to do this sort of thing. We can get by by being respect-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ful and mannerly." I said I would surely be respectful and mannerly, and I would take my cues from him. Time passed, and I envisioned the Emperor getting up from his nap and dressing. Suddenly the door opened and Minister Medhen appeared, waving to us energetically. We jumped up and went through the door. Somehow, though I had not planned it that way, I was in front and Gordon behind, so I had no one to give me clues about protocol. Haile Selassie was sitting behind his desk. Between me and the desk two huge Great Danes were lying on the rug. They eyed me with suspicion but did not move. (They were replacements for two pet lions Selassie had owned before the Italian invasion. The Italians sent the lions to the Rome zoo.)

I went forward (around the dogs) and addressed Selassie in my best French, which I had practiced in the waiting room. He acknowledged my greeting and moved his eyes toward where Gordon was entering. I turned and saw Gordon moving one step at a time, inclining his head, stepping again. I was very annoyed to see him one-upping me in this fashion and resolved to confront him with it later.

My impressions of the Emperor didn't come instantly but developed during the course of our meeting. I had the feeling of having been in his presence before. Those newsreels and photographs of him when he went to the League of Nations at Geneva to plead for action against Italy's invasion of his country in 1935 were still imprinted on my mind. So were the masterful, prophetic (and futile) words he addressed to that dying world organization: "Is the League of Nations about to end its own existence by tearing up, with its own hands, the Covenant which constitutes its sole reason for existence?"

He looked the same, though I could now see gray hairs among the black. He didn't seem as small as I remembered him. (Perhaps his chair seat was raised a little.) His face was that of a genial grandfather. He wore an undecorated uniform, and the cloak in which he was often photographed was draped loosely over the back of his chair. Something about him made him seem larger than life, and this impression never left me.

Selassie was very cordial. He broke the ice by telling us about Ethiopia's difficult situation. For one thing, the country had been stripped of most of its motorcars, machine tools, generators, blankets, and other things of value first by the retreating Italians and then by the British forces that had driven them out. Ethiopia owned no aircraft and had to depend on British government planes and British whim for both human and cargo transport, and it could only import materials of British manufacture. Foodstuffs were scarce. There were not enough capable teachers for the capital's elementary and high schools, so they had to rely on Egyptian and Syrian teachers who did not understand Ethiopian culture and could not teach in Amharic or any of the other Ethiopian languages, only English or French. They did have some Ethiopian monks among their teachers, but the monks customarily taught only by rote. Beyond these difficulties was the fact that the Italian occupiers under Marshal Badoglio had executed a significant segment of the literate, professional class, including most of the young people Selassie had sent to Europe and America for university educations. Selassie stressed that a crash education program was his first priority for the country.

He acknowledged that strong cultural biases and different languages among the various ethnic groups were a major problem. The Amhara, Galla, Somali, and others considered themselves separate entities, were distrustful of one another, and disinclined to cooperate. Also there were numerous small tribal groups speaking Nilotic or Cushitic languages who would have to be brought into the political mainstream. One of the Emperor's projects was to set up what I seem to remember his calling "acculturation schools." The program was to establish boarding schools, to which, as a start, the chiefs would send their school-age sons. Thus boys and young men of different cultures would live and study together, be more aware of each other's ways, become friends, and learn that they had common interests in Ethiopia's future. Also, a normal school was being built.

One of Selassie's concerns was that Ethiopia was sometimes regarded in the Western world as a backward, medieval, and savage country. He noted that Christianity had come to Ethiopia as early as the fourth century. Economically the country was certainly backward, and politically he acknowledged that it would have to move steadily, but not precipitously, toward a more representative democracy. But for this to happen he would have to

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

rebuild an educated class and make literacy more the norm than the exception. It was his belief that most Ethiopians approved of his careful approach to reforms, but he acknowledged that there were young Turks who wanted him out and themselves in control of the government. Other than an end to the monarchy they did not have any visible program, though some were thinking of the Soviet Union rather than Western democracies as a model. He said that the British were showing signs of wanting to stay on as long as possible after the war, with Ethiopia in the role of a mandated territory or protectorate, but that any hegemony would be totally unacceptable to the Ethiopian people.

When he indicated that he was ready to hear from us, Gordon motioned to me to begin. Conscious of my temerity, I nevertheless gave my view that Ethiopia should move as rapidly as possible toward strong ties with the United States, though I couldn't say how that was to be done. I also said I was prepared to approach various foundations and educational establishments in the United States to help recruit teachers for Ethiopian schools and named a number of institutions with which I was familiar. Selassie was pleased and said he would have Makonnen Desta, the education minister, get in touch with me the following morning. Then Gordon began to speak about the long-dreamed-of Lake Tana Dam, with the proposal that he could do some lecturing and lobbying in its behalf. Though it would be a long-range project, and Selassie was most interested in immediate problems, he nevertheless showed interest.

Our visit lasted about an hour, and after expressing appreciation for the time the Emperor had given us, I headed for the door. As with our entrance, I suddenly realized that Gordon was not in front of me but behind. I turned and saw him backing out one step at a time, inclining his head between steps, just as he had done coming in. I did not feel very friendly toward him at that moment. Then I saw that he was backing toward one of the Great Danes drowsing on the carpet. I could have warned him, but I felt that a cosmic act of justice was about to take place, in the presence of which I was nothing but a mere mortal witness. It was like a slow-motion dream. Two more backward steps and two more inclinations of his head, and Gordon fell over the dog. He was lying on his back with his feet in the air. Both dogs leaped at him, and one had his teeth in Gordon's sleeve. The Emperor jumped up, ran around the desk, and pulled the dogs off. I don't remember what was said, only the sound of Gordon giggling, and the sight of him now going *forward* toward the door—an unconventional ending to a royal audience. I no longer felt the need to speak to Gordon about the one step forward-backward business.

Minister Medhen took us to his house for something to eat, then to the airfield to get information about our flight home. The pilot told us, "I can't stop over. They want me back at Gura tonight. We'll leave in half an hour." We remonstrated, saying we were needed for at least one more day, possibly two or three. He said he had no choice. We could go with him or stay behind, though we might have difficulty getting back to Gura on our own. We told him we'd have to take our chances. Medhen took us to the only hotel available in Addis Ababa, one operated by Italians. Anywhere else it would have been classified as a fleabag, but the faded and chipped decor suggested that it probably once had been rather elegant. It was a five- or six-story building, and our rooms were on the top floor—directly under the water tank. (Every morning when the tank was filled, it overflowed and dripped water through the ceiling right onto our beds.)

That evening we ate in the hotel restaurant hoping to get a good Italian dinner. The only thing I remember about it was the antipasto, served on a large platter with a silver-plated cover. When the cover was removed by the waiter with great flair, it revealed two pieces of lettuce, a small wedge of butter, and a slice of cheese.

Early the next morning we had a phone call from Makonnen Desta, the minister of education, who was taking us under his wing. He picked us up with his car at the hotel. Desta was Harvard educated, had a good sense of humor, and was totally dedicated to bringing literacy to the entire country. He took us on a tour of many of the schools in Addis Ababa, including the trade school, which was conspicuously lacking in lathes and other machine tools, as well as in raw materials with which to work. In the elementary schools the lack of books in the Amharic language was also conspicuous. (The Italians, when they were there, had substituted books in the Ital-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ian language.) Some language classes in English were taught by Egyptians, and because of the absence of books, the teaching was almost exclusively by the repeat-after-me method—with the addition of a conspicuous Egyptian accent. We visited one class taught by a monk, whose repertoire seemed to be solely the Ethiopian holy books written in archaic Geez, a language hardly understood by most of the young students. Desta kept commenting, "You can see why we need teachers."

Desta also took us to a laboratory where research was being done on vaccines for typhus and other diseases prevalent in the country. The laboratory, too, suffered from a lack of equipment. Every morning for several days thereafter Desta took us on such tours. Nothing we saw or heard related in any way, however, to Gordon MacCreagh's special interest, the Lake Tana Dam.

One evening Desta had us to his home for a large buffet gathering. French was the language of the occasion, and I felt somewhat disadvantaged in making conversation with the guests. But the servants kept us well supplied with martinis, a drink Desta had learned to love at Harvard. I found that every martini refill miraculously increased my competence in the French language. After a while I felt quite at home with everything and was able to converse fluently on almost any subject. Finally we were invited to go to the long buffet table and fill our plates.

There was a long row of large cut-glass bowls, each containing meat and other things cut in small pieces. As I reached the first bowl, I became a little uncertain, thinking about the Ethiopian predilection for raw meat. (I'd heard about certain festivals in which animals were killed and eaten instantly without cooking.) I felt Makonnen Desta's hand on my shoulder. He said, "Courlander, don't hesitate! It's delicious!" He spooned some of it on my plate, all the while telling me what this gourmet's delight consisted of—various bovine organs that I would never eat at home, even cooked. He moved me to the next bowl and spooned again, regaling me with another list of organs, including the unmentionable ones. Then to the next bowl and another enumeration, and so on, right to the end of the table. My plate was virtually overflowing. I carried it away and sat on the sofa, wondering how in the world I had ever gotten into this predicament. I messed the plate around a little with my fork, pretending to eat. When another martini appeared, I set the plate on a low coffee table and sipped, making a little conversation with one of the guests. And when I thought no one would notice, I put the plate on the floor and slid it under the sofa. Eventually the evening came to an end, and Desta had his driver take Gordon and me back to the hotel. We asked the desk clerk to have us awakened at seven in the morning. But the phone rang at five. I heard Desta at the other end saying triumphantly, "Courlander, I found it!"

Desta was in touch with us every day. I asked him to provide us with a formal document requesting educational assistance that I could use in my contacts with foundations in the United States. This he did before our departure. It made no reference to the Lake Tana Dam proposal, though Gordon may have been given a separate document under a foreign ministry letterhead.

Minister Medhen drove to our hotel early one day to say that the Emperor wanted to talk with us again. We ate a hurried breakfast and were taken to the palace. This time Gordon walked into the Emperor's office quite straightforwardly, with only just a suggestion of neck bending. Selassie began the conversation by apologizing for the long, uncut grass around the palace, indicating that funds for public works had run out. He spoke sorrowfully of a legally authorized execution that had taken place that morning. Four Ethiopians convicted of robbing and killing a foreign national had been hanged in the open-air market. Somehow the subject turned to slavery, which Selassie had abolished some years before. He deplored that Western writers occasionally spoke of slavery in Ethiopia as if it still existed. He was very concerned about the Ethiopian image and stressed the efforts he was making to bring the country up to the best twentieth-century standards. This led again to the subject of schools and education, which, among other things, would help to diminish stresses between ethnic communities.

I reaffirmed my intention to do what I could to help obtain teachers and school supplies of various sorts and enumerated some of the foundations I intended to approach. He wanted to know how soon I might begin, and I told him I would return to the United States

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

as soon as our commanding officer at Gura, Colonel Harry Bishop, would authorize it. I also promised to speak to Colonel Bishop about machine tools and other supplies for the Addis Ababa Industrial School.

Eventually Selassie turned his attention to MacCreagh and the projected Lake Tana Dam. Gordon had given a lot of thought to the project and spoke of what needed to be done and what he himself could do as a lobbyist in the United States. Selassie obviously liked Gordon, and there was an almost personal tone in his questions. At some point in the discussion of the dam, Selassie said (I thought I detected a slight twinkle in his eyes), "Mr. MacCreagh, I have listened with great interest. I hope you will be able to accomplish some of the things you have been talking about. What I would like to know is what you think your remuneration for this important work might be." Gordon seemed slightly abashed, though I had the impression he was putting on this face for the occasion. After a slight pause he said, "Your Majesty, when the dam is under construction, I would like to have the hot dog concession." Selassie answered quite soberly, saying, "Very well, we will talk about it again when the time comes."

After our meeting with the Emperor, we decided to walk to the open-air market where the executions had taken place. The bodies were supposed to hang there for three days as a signal that murder would not be forgiven. But, as we approached the market, we saw that it was virtually empty. Someone told us that the vendors would not return until the bodies had been removed. The marketplace commerce had come to a halt. So we spent the rest of the day browsing through the city and began to ponder how we would get back to Gura.

The only planes operating regularly out of Addis Ababa were B.O.A.C. craft under British government control. Desta and Medhen both had told us we probably wouldn't have much luck there, because the British kept all "foreigners," including Ethiopian government officials, at the bottom of the waiting list. Virtually no one could get space to Asmara or Cairo except British military and civilian personnel. But we tried anyway. We talked to several B.O.A.C. people, including the colonel in charge, and showed our papers identifying us as Americans from the Gura Project 19 airfield. All the colonel would tell us was that if an opportunity were to arise he would let us know. We reported this to Makonnen Desta, who said, "Forget it, old boy, forget it. I'll do my best to get you home—somehow."

The Ethiopians were trying to overcome their frustrating situation of having no aircraft of their own and having to depend entirely on British policy or whim. Nine unflyable Caproni planes had been left behind by the Italians, but there were no replacement parts. With the help of two mechanics from Gura, they were disassembling the planes and attempting to create three operable ones out of the cannibalized nine. They hoped to have, eventually, their own mail service to Khartoum and Cairo, as well as two passenger aircraft. They were also attempting to construct a radio transmitter so that their communications would not always have to pass through British hands and scrutiny, but somehow the required equipment never arrived by B.O.A.C. ("No space," they were told.)

Gordon and I talked to a number of British officials in Addis Ababa, including the information officer, about our need for transportation. Most were sympathetic but not hopeful that B.O.A.C. would take us. Yet in these conversations we did get impressions of British thoughts about the future of Ethiopia. (Ever since Selassie's enthronement as king in 1928—until then he was known as Ras Tafari Makonnen—and emperor in 1930, the British had sought some kind of hegemony over or special influence in the country.) It seemed to us that they were disseminating exaggerated reports about the country's condition and entertaining at least the hope of staying on for an undetermined time. They constantly told ominous stories of unrest here and there, open revolts against Selassie in the Galla southland, secessionist agitation in the Somali east, large bands of *shiftas* (read: outlaws and bandits) in the mountains attacking government outposts and transport, and inept administration by Selassie (no mention, of course, of how the British army had routinely stripped the country of vital equipment). What they were saying was much like what we'd been hearing in Eritrea, though the situation was somewhat different there because Eritrea had been an Italian colony.

Since we had no further official duties in Addis Ababa, Gordon and I spent time sightseeing on foot and picking up trinkets for some of our barrack mates—headrests, combs,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

small forged weapons, religious parchments in the Geez language, traditional paintings on cloth, and so on. I had a request from Bob Kane, a close friend at Gura, to bring him a leopard skin and a colobus monkey-skin blanket. Though I never found a monkey-skin blanket, I was able to buy a leopard skin from a wandering vendor. As it happened, the leopard skin proved to be very important to me on the trip home.

We had been in Addis Ababa about three weeks when we received a message from Desta saying he had arranged transportation for us back to Eritrea. The government paymaster was leaving the next morning with long-overdue Maria Theresa dollars for Ethiopian troops in the north, and we were to ride with him. We went out immediately to gather a few provisions for the trip. The first grocery we entered had totally empty shelves. The second had a few sacks of salt and a single bag of flour. The third had one can on its shelves, and it proved to be sliced pineapple of Chinese origin. We bought it at an exorbitant price and continued the search, but didn't manage to find anything else that would be useful.

Our transport turned out to be a vintage open car, the make of which was ambiguous. The paymaster and the driver occupied the front seat, and in the back were Gordon, myself, and a Baptist missionary's fifteen-year-old son who, for whatever reason, was being sent to a missionary establishment in Asmara. Desta had thoughtfully provided us with some ragged Italian army blankets that would help to keep us warm in the high altitudes at night. We welcomed them even though it was evident that they had not been cleaned since the Italian occupation. Traveling behind us was an open truck carrying six drums of gasoline to fuel the trip, along with four Ethiopian soldiers whose main duty was to guard the paymaster and several sacks of Maria Theresa dollars stuffed under the front seat of our car.

There was only one road to the north, through Dessye and Quoram and mostly along the highest ridges of the mountains, which at one point reached an altitude of more than twelve thousand feet. The paymaster was to let us off at Adigrat, from where he would go west to Axum and beyond. It was not a trip compatible with a vintage car in poor repair. Less than an hour from Addis Ababa the radiator began to steam. The truck carried a little water, but it didn't last long because the radiator was leaking badly. We came to a stream, from which the driver scooped up mud and forced it into the radiator, washing it down with water. Eventually the mud settled to the bottom and clogged the hole. After that it didn't take much water to refill the radiator. We steamed our way very slowly for the next hour or so until we came to a ramshackle building that had once been a service station. The owner-mechanic, an aged Ethiopian, lived in a small house behind the station. Though he had no replacement parts of any kind, he was able to remove the radiator, flush out the mud, and solder the hole. After that the car ran reasonably well.

When it grew dark, the paymaster suggested that we stop for the night in the proximity of a small village, but Gordon insisted that we keep driving. He recalled that somewhere along the way there was a particular place, a kind of short-order restaurant in what he called "the pass" (there were many such passes), where Italian truck drivers used to stop during the occupation. We arrived there after midnight. The neighboring village was dark, but the "ristorante" had a single kerosene lamp in the window to attract the attention of any passers-by. As we entered the dilapidated premises, the Ethiopian owner met us with a big smile. He lighted several more kerosene lamps, hung a napkin over his arm, and waved us graciously toward a half-dozen crude, timeworn tables and benches, some carved with initials and in several places the word *Duce*.

We were quite hungry, not having eaten since morning, and looked forward to a substantial meal. We asked the man what he could offer us. He pondered as if in deep thought, then said in English, "You like eggs? Very good fried eggs?" We asked what the alternatives were, perhaps bacon, beans, or spaghetti. He responded regretfully that he didn't have any. We mentioned other possibilities, such as ham or potatoes, but he shook his head apologetically, saying, "Oh, very unfortunate, we do not have such things because of the conditions. Supplies are hard to get." We tried, not very hopefully, for canned soup, but the answer was the same. Finally, seemingly inspired, he said, "Perhaps you will have some eggs? Very good fried eggs?" By this time we understood that eggs were all he had, so we agreed.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The cooking area was in a far corner of the room. The equipment consisted of a charcoal stove and some dishes, pots, and pans set out on a table. Our host adjusted the napkin on his arm, turned toward the kitchen corner as if someone were there and called out loudly, "Eggs!" Then he hurried to his stove, took the napkin from his arm and doffed a French chef's hat, after which he called back in response, "Eggs!" Then he hurried to his stove, took the napkin from his arm, and doffed a French chef's hat, after which he called back in response, "Eggs!" When the eggs were fried, he called out as if to a waiter, "Eggs ready!" He took off his chef's cap, put the napkin over his arm, and delivered the food to us, four fried eggs to a plate. We ordered more, and he went through the same routine of calling "Eggs!" back and forth.

When we were finished, Gordon negotiated with our host, who was very agreeable, about sleeping arrangements. He pulled two tables together, unrolled his blanket, and climbed aboard. The paymaster and the missionary's son did likewise. I myself opted to sleep in the back seat of the car, which proved to be the best deal, though the thin Italian army blanket failed to keep out the cold. Then I remembered the leopard skin that I was taking to Bob Kane. It kept me quite warm. When the others arose from their tables in the morning they looked very haggard, and I had to assume they hadn't slept too well. Gordon wouldn't admit to it, as it had been his idea of how such things should be done. But the missionary boy said flatly that it had been too cold, too hard, and too many bedbugs. After that night, the paymaster always slept in the front seat of the car while I maintained possession of the back.

During the four or five days it took us to get to Adigrat, in every village we passed there were women at the roadside selling hard-boiled eggs. I don't recall eating anything but hard-boiled eggs up to the last night on the road. We drank only tea (brought by the paymaster). We often passed inviting streams and waterfalls, but forbore drinking from them—all of us, that is, except the missionary boy. Later we heard that he was in the hospital at Asmara with acute dysentery.

Early one morning we were going through a high mountain pass, and as we went around a bend we saw a village about a quarter of a mile ahead, out of which poured a large party of shouting, running men. As they came towards us, we could see that they all carried rifles or curved swords called guradè, as well as traditional Ethiopian shields. A lot of thoughts went through our minds. Did they mistake us for Italians? No Italian was safe in the countryside. Or were they *shiftas*—outlaws who hid out in the mountains and preyed on travelers? We knew that, whatever it was all about, it was serious.

Our driver brought the car to a halt, started to get out, then decided there was no place to go. There was a tall cliff wall on one side, a sheer drop-off on the other. The paymaster reached under his seat and pulled out a small .22-caliber rifle, looked at it pathetically for a moment, then put it back. I turned to look at the fuel truck. It had stopped right behind us, but the military personnel had disappeared. I thought that Gordon was possibly the only one among us who had any answers. But he didn't say anything. All I heard from him was a kind of giggle, much like what I'd heard when he fell over the Emperor's Great Dane. The advancing warriors were chanting and waving their weapons. They were a hundred yards away, then fifty. I don't believe I had any last thoughts, at least I don't remember any. The warriors reached the car and swept around it on both sides. To our astonishment, they kept on going. It was almost as though we were not there. They turned off the road and went down a precipitous trail. After a while we could see them down below running single file. It was only then that we noticed a small village on a distant bluff. When the war party had completely disappeared from sight, our driver started the car, and we proceeded slowly to the settlement that straddled the road immediately ahead. Our four Ethiopian soldiers materialized, from where I can't say, and the truck followed us.

The village appeared to be in a state of great disorder. Women were standing in front of their houses wailing and making motions of distress with their arms and hands. The paymaster got out and talked to an old man walking along the road, after which he came back and explained to us that the party was going on a reprisal raid against the other settlement below. Someone from the lower village had killed two people in the upper village the previous evening, and now the upper village was going on a vendetta expe-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

dition. The men (and boys) had been preparing since midnight, and now they were on their way.

We continued the journey, the paymaster increasingly nervous about *shiftas* who might waylay us for the payroll he was carrying, but no *shiftas* materialized. After our meeting with the vendetta party, nothing noteworthy happened to mar the rest of the trip. That is, except for a small personal encounter I had one night when we were going through a heavily forested region. We made a rest stop to stretch our legs. I walked ahead of the car about fifty yards to a point where the light from our headlights was dim, and turned to urinate. I heard a rustle in front of me and saw in the faint light that I was urinating on a startled warthog. We both spun around and began to run, he into the blackness of the bush and I back up the road toward the car. I'm positive that I had a faster elapsed time for the fifty yards than he did.

Occasionally along the road or sometimes in an adjoining field we found inscribed stone monuments left by the Italians during their 1935 invasion. Many Italian military units had with them crews of stonecutters who set up monuments wherever the troops had encounters with resisting Ethiopians, or even where they camped for the night. Carved in classical lettering that used a *V* for a *U*, the monuments were engraved with eulogies, such as, "Here [on such and such a date] Italian forces under Marshal Badoglio met and overwhelmed four thousand [or whatever number] Ethiopians. Long live Mussolini."

Eventually we arrived at Adigrat, where Gordon, the missionary boy, and I parted from the paymaster's convoy. The previous night we had celebrated by opening and sharing our can of Chinese pineapple. We found the Adigrat-to-Asmara bus without difficulty. It was about the same age as the paymaster's car but in slightly better condition. I don't recall how long that last leg of the trip took, but it was shorter than expected because the road passed close by the Gura airfield. We said good-bye to the missionary boy and got off the bus.

Within the next few days we made detailed reports to Colonel Bishop—Gordon's on the Lake Tana Dam and mine on the general scene, our interviews with Selassie and other Ethiopian officials, the Emperor's educational needs, and my promise to help secure teachers. A few days later Colonel Bishop gave us orders for air passage back to the United States.

As soon as possible after my return to New York, I approached a number of foundations about Selassie's request for American teachers and other educational aid and gave them copies of the document prepared by Makonnen Desta. I cannot say what most of them did or did not do, but Henry Allen Moe, president of the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation, was very interested and suggested that I let him carry the ball from that point on, which I did. I heard later from Ethiopia that Henry Moe did get some teachers for them, and, eventually, the U.S. government began to provide other educational aid.

Gordon MacCreagh lived in Florida. We lost touch with each other, and I never found out what he did about the Lake Tana Dam. But a few months after our return, I received a special-delivery letter from him. He had won a contract to be the official photographer of sailing races scheduled to take place at St. Petersburg, but alas, he didn't have a camera. Could I lend him mine? Unfortunately, I'd sold my camera (one step up from a Brownie) before leaving Gura.

Much had already been written about Haile Selassie, but to me those writings seemed to be nothing more than footnotes to history. He was sometimes depicted as a British pawn, and his many social reforms (such as the abolition of slavery and the traditional right of vendetta, and his efforts to improve education throughout the country) went largely unnoticed. It occurred to me that an autobiography by Selassie published in the United States might do a great deal to put him and his country in a better perspective.

I cannot at the moment fix the date, but a year or so after my return, Blatta Ephrem Towolde Medhen became minister to the United States. I reported to him by letter from New York on what I had managed to do about teachers and also suggested that Selassie be persuaded to write the autobiography. In reply, he said some teachers had actually arrived in Ethiopia as a result of my efforts, and he invited me to come to the embassy to discuss the autobiography. I then took the matter up with a close friend, Maurice Kaplan, at that time associated with Henry Holt and Company. He thought Holt would be eager to publish such a book, and we went to Wash-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ington together. We had dinner with Medhen at the embassy, during which we talked at length about the book project. Medhen liked the idea and said he would pass the proposal on to the Emperor.

A few weeks (or months) later, I met with Medhen again. He said Selassie had given thought to the idea and was agreeable to it. However, it was obviously a time-consuming task, and he invited me to come back to Addis Ababa to undertake the organizing and writing of the book myself. The Emperor would spend time with me and narrate his story and make available whatever documents I might need. It was obvious that—if nothing else—my oversized gabardine suit had not made a lasting adverse impression on the Emperor. It was a flattering invitation and difficult to decline. But I now had a civilian job with the Office of War Information and was expecting to be drafted within the next few months. I proposed to Medhen that Makonnen Desta, a nephew of the Emperor, I think, and fluent in the English language, should be put to work on the book. (I am certain that this was never done.)

But it is pleasant to think that, had I found it possible to go to Addis Ababa for the year or two that would have been required, I might now be able to list among my writings a work entitled:

The Life of Haile Selassie I,
King of Kings, Lion of Judah,
Including his Earliest Days,
His Service as Governor of Shoa,
His Abolition of Slavery in Ethiopia,
His resistance to the Italians,
And His Return to Addis Ababa Following
Their Defeat,
as told to Harold Courlander

Even if I had been able to work on the autobiography project at that time, the result would have been highly inadequate, for Selassie lived another three decades and these years changed the course of Ethiopian history. He enacted land and other reforms and provided a new constitution aiming toward, if not actually creating, a parliamentary democracy. He struggled with ethnic and regional pressures against the central government, put down a coup that was launched while he was abroad, and reclaimed Eritrea as an integral part of Ethiopia. (The United Nations had set up Eritrea as a federated state under the Crown.) The consolidation of Eritrea with Ethiopia set into motion a war of resistance that continues to this day.

In the course of these events he was sometimes jostled by foreign powers and increasingly impeded by anti-government political movements (some of them Marxist), conspiracies, and difficulties with the military. The "young Turks" were determined to take over, and in the end they won out. In 1974 the Emperor was dethroned and placed under house imprisonment in the old Menelik Palace. Thenceforth his name was rarely mentioned by the new rulers, even though in the rural outlands people often spoke of him as if he were still the King of Kings. I cannot say he was a broken old man, for no one has recorded how his character weathered these final events in his life. But his health failed, and he died in 1975 at the age of eighty-three, still cut off from the outside world. It was generally accepted that his death was the result of medical neglect, though the country's new rulers denied it. Many Ethiopians believed that he was shot.

Those who knew Selassie have their own personal impressions of him. But I believe that, for most of us who remember him at all, he will always be the small but larger-than-life man who stood before the League of Nations Assembly and eloquently urged it to do its duty in the face of aggression. The League did not do it, and it died long before he did.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Graduates

E. B. DE VITO

They, most of all, are unaware
that schooling is not the whole, by far.
They, least of any, understand
the immeasurable range and scope
of things that unknowingly, they know.

Lessons are breathed in from the air:
the calm or turbulence of their vista
from words tossed lightly, emotions, brief,
but always played at concert pitch.
Truths are stored and preserved by chance
like the gilded dust from golden objects
that rub together carelessly.

Knowledge comes, in a way, unsought,
as in the Chinese tale
of the youth who came for daily lessons
in what there was to learn of jade.
And each day, for a single hour,
while he and the master talked together
always of unrelated matters,
jade pieces were slipped into his hand,
till one day, when a month had passed,
the young man paused and with a frown,
said suddenly, "That is not jade."

As Life is something, we are told,
that happens while you make other plans,
learning slips in and comes to stay
while you are faced the other way.

✪ E. B. DE VITO's poems have appeared in *The New Yorker, Saturday Evening Post, Commonweal,* and other magazines.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Country Lawyer Remembered

WILLIAM DOMNARSKI

The profile of the American lawyer as we know him today began to come into focus approximately fifty years ago. By that time the idea had been accepted that lawyers could band together in large firms to cater to corporate clients with particular needs, and with the legal landscape expanding to include such new areas as regulatory, administrative, and tax law, specialization became possible, if not absolutely necessary. The rural solo practitioner, better known as the country lawyer, whose independence and courtliness had for so long defined the public's perception of the lawyer, still existed and did well for himself, but he was beginning to fade as the leading representative of the profession. Against the background of a changing profession, a profile of the lawyers of rural Windham County in Connecticut's northeast corner one-half century ago reminds us of both the practice and the practitioners of law we are likely never to see again.

There were thirty-one lawyers in the late 1930s who were serving the fifty-four thousand residents of Windham County. The median age of the lawyers was forty-nine, the average age fifty-one. Some of the older lawyers had trained by reading law in an office, while the younger ones, following a trend that had spread nationwide, had studied more formally at a law school. Seventeen lawyers had legal educations. There were twelve lawyers who had earned law degrees from Harvard, Yale, Columbia, Virginia, Georgetown, and Boston University. And in this day, when a college degree was not required for admission to law school, nearly a dozen Windham County lawyers had undergraduate degrees to go with their law degrees.

All but one of the thirty-one lawyers in Windham County practiced in the three commercial centers of Willimantic, Danielson, and Putnam, which had populations of 12,102, 4,210, and 7,310 respectively. These were Main Street towns. The commercial, retail, and professional district in Willimantic extended for only six blocks on Main Street. There were two two-lawyer partnerships in the county, both in Putnam. The remaining lawyers were solo practitioners, though a few clubbed together in office-sharing arrangements in which expenses but not fees were shared. Clients found the law offices, of course, on Main Street.

These lawyers were general practitioners. While some had built up practices that emphasized probate, real estate, or trial work, all of them handled the garden-variety cases that came through the door. They collected money, drafted wills and other instruments, conducted real estate transactions, handled divorces, and tried the cases that could not be settled. The lawyers sometimes represented businesses and corporations, but in the main their clients were individuals. The minimum fee schedule of the period shows that they would consult with a client for two dollars, draft a mortgage note and deed for four dollars, organize a corporation with stock for one hundred dollars, and search a title for fifteen dollars. For trial work the lawyers charged twenty-five dollars per day, unless there was a contingency fee agreement. A divorce, when

✪ WILLIAM DOMNARSKI practices law in Mansfield, Connecticut, and writes frequently about legal and literary matters.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

no defense was made, cost seventy-five dollars.

Lawyers followed their cases to one of four kinds of courts. A case went to Superior Court when more than three hundred dollars was involved in civil cases and when six months in jail or two hundred fifty dollars in fines was involved for criminal matters. When under these limits, cases went to the city courts of Putnam, Danielson, or Willimantic, where the locally elected part-time judges were politically affiliated lawyers in the town. These jurisdictional limits reigned, except for minor matters in the smaller, outlying towns, where the justice courts had jurisdiction. A town's justice of the peace presided in those outlying areas. He was often a farmer or tradesman by day and judicial officer by night and usually heard cases in his living room. Probate matters went to probate courts for the individual towns and were administered by elected judges who rarely were lawyers. The Superior Court sessions alternated every six months between Putnam and Willimantic. In Putnam, sessions were held above a grocery store. The judge's chambers were wood paneled and had a working fireplace, and on cold days the clerk would have a fire going, creating a charming effect.

This was a time before lawyers advertised. The most a lawyer could do was list his name in the phone directory and put a small sign in his window. One lawyer from Hartford, the state capital twenty-five miles to the east of Willimantic, tried to extend his territory by also getting a listing in the Willimantic phone directory but got only the threat of disciplinary action instead. Being known was what mattered. Some lawyers were fortunate enough to have publicized trials to heighten their visibility. Others wore more than one hat to spread their name. They would have their own practices but would also serve in part-time posts, such as local prosecutor, public defender, city-court judge, or bankruptcy referee. Some had the extra advantage of having fathers who were also lawyers in town to give them name recognition or even clients.

In this time before word processors, computerized research, photocopiers, and paralegals, lawyers relied on the telephone, carbon paper, and the manual typewriter. More than a few did not have full-time secretaries. At least one lawyer conscripted his wife for that role. It did not take much to open an office. As one lawyer said, "I started alone. I bought a secondhand typewriter and just set up an office." The emphasis was on function, not form. Offices were small. Extra space was rented out. The 1930s saw the arrival of two important research sources that would change the way lawyers researched the law—*Corpus Juris Secundum*, the legal encyclopedia published by the West Publishing Company, and the *American Law Reports* published by the Lawyers Cooperative Publishing Company—but in Windham County the only sets were found at the county bar library. A lawyer in the county had the *Connecticut Reports*, a digest to go with them, some forms books, and, in some cases, the *U.S. Reports*.

During the 1930s local bar associations were being formed around the country to complement the already existing state bar associations. The lawyers of Windham County followed suit in 1935 by forming the Windham County Bar Association. Twenty-nine of the county's thirty-one lawyers joined the association at its inception. Its purpose, as declared in the articles of incorporation, was typical of the day. It was to "uphold and improve the standard of moral and intellectual qualifications in the practice of law; to maintain the honor and dignity of the profession; to exert its influence and aid in all proper ways toward the furtherance of any sound and needed change in the law . . . and to provide social intercourse among the members of the Association."

The most respected lawyer in the county in 1935 was William A. King. In addition to having once been elected to the post of attorney general for the state, he had been a great trial lawyer in his day and was a living legend to the other lawyers in the county. He would have been an ideal choice as the association's first president, but at eighty years of age he was infirm and retired from the active practice of law. The association turned to Sam Harvey, then sixty-nine years of age, for leadership, noting in the record at the time of his election as president that "it was voted that the chair designate a committee of two to prepare a letter to W. A. King with relation to the sentiment of this Association."

Sam Harvey, the quintessential Yankee, was famous for his skills as a trial lawyer, his courtesy and graciousness, and his eccentricities. One well-known story about him has it that in the days before automobiles, rather

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

than merely making a phone call, he would go by horse and buggy from his office in Willimantic all the way to Putnam to ask for a continuance, so great was his respect for the court. But at the same time he was feisty and expected his adversary to show his respect as well. Once Harvey was pitted against a large and not especially liked Hartford firm in a case in Putnam. The firm had previously failed to appear to argue a motion and a default had been entered against it. When the firm later moved to reopen the case, Harvey illustrated the egregiousness of the firm's failure to appear at the prior motion by reading each and every name listed on the firm's letterhead, arguing to the judge that the firm had not had the courtesy to send even one of its lawyers. Persuaded by this, the judge denied the firm's motion to reopen the case.

Sometimes what seemed to be courtesy was something far different. Harvey almost never objected when his adversary questioned a witness on the stand, but that was not because he was polite. He was lying in wait, and when his turn came to sum up the case, he destroyed his opponents by going to the heart of the case as he perceptively saw it.

Remembering Sam Harvey with great fondness, T. Emmet Clarie of Danielson, who rose to the federal bench in 1962 after twenty-two years of private practice, recalls:

> Sam was not only a very able attorney but a very good person. I remember a case I had with him once. His client had been hit in an automobile accident by my client. The fellow was a pedestrian. And I know he started out demanding a substantial sum of money for the injuries, and they were substantial injuries. As it turned out, my client didn't have any insurance. All he had was his home. [Sam's] whole perspective changed when he learned this. He wasn't interested in taking this man's home. All he wanted him to pay was a reasonable sum, from his bank account or from future earnings, but not his home. I never forgot him for that.

To describe Sam Harvey as colorful might be an understatement. Somewhat akin to Proust's character in *Remembrance of Things Past* who refused to be influenced by the "arbitrary divisions of what is known as time," Sam Harvey refused to follow daylight savings time from its creation in 1918. He even developed an aversion to electricity. He had no electric lights in his office, where he preferred to use oil lamps instead. This shunning of electricity had begun as a result of a dispute with the power company, but in time he became fond of the atmosphere that the lamps created and simply had no need for electricity. In addition to practicing law, he owned cattle. He himself worked the fields that supported the cattle, and he died while plowing a field—in harness, in effect. The suits he wore were of a different cut. His signature string tie was, in fact, a shoelace. "We didn't know who his tailor was," one lawyer recalls, "and naturally nobody inquired about his identity." When he argued a case he made notes on slips of paper and would retrieve them from various pockets in his clothing as he went along to freshen his memory. There were no rugs in his office, only a bare wood floor that he scrubbed, on his knees, every Saturday. He was fiercely independent. Even though his son, John, had come to the bar in 1925 after taking his law degree from Yale University and practiced in the same town as his father for thirty years, sometimes even in the same building, they never practiced together. They were close, however, working together in the fields rather than in the law office.

In its first five years, the association held meetings nearly every month. Sites for the meetings alternated between Willimantic, Danielson, and Putnam. The twenty-five-mile distance from Willimantic to Danielson to the east and the ten miles from Danielson to Putnam to the north, in that age of two-lane highways, meant that most of the twenty members who regularly attended the meetings had a fair distance to drive after a hard day at the office. But drive they did.

The members discussed a variety of topics at their meetings. As might be expected, they discussed fees and office-related topics, but they also discussed recent decisions of the Connecticut Supreme Court. They prepared and discussed papers on such subjects as life tenancy, inferences and presumptions, martial law, and the lawyer's professional life. They invited guests to speak on historical and professionally related topics, and they often invited the Superior Court judges sitting in the county to talk about their own days in practice. They took stands on both national and local legal issues. They resolved to condemn Franklin Roosevelt's court-packing plan, and they voted to look into the problem

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

caused by lawyers from other counties coming into Windham County for probate work. On the lighter side, the members discussed vacation trips and their hobbies or recreational interests, such as skiing, and occasionally they noted the birthdays of older members with a song.

The members expressed a keen interest in their own history. They considered the possibility of preparing a list of all the lawyers produced in the county and looked into whether photographs were available of the past Superior and Supreme Court judges from the county. They arranged for a portrait of Justice George Hinman, a leading member of the county bar then sitting on the state supreme court, though the overwhelming Republican majority objected to having the WPA participate in the project. They also sought to locate the burial places of former county lawyers and prepared biographical sketches of some of the notable nineteenth-century county lawyers, which were read at the meetings and made part of the record. These sketches looked as much to a lawyer's personal qualities as to his achievements at the bar.

A committee of one to three members was appointed to prepare an obituary sketch when a member died. Upon the death in 1938 of Edward Dennis, for example, who practiced in Scotland, a town of 402, the association noted:

> The Windham County Bar Association recognizes that Judge Dennis, in his untiring zeal and undaunted courage in representing the interests of his clients and his faithfulness and integrity in the various positions which he held and particularly in initiating the program of the Juvenile Courts in this state, in his cheerful outlook on life, his divergent interests, his gracious and courteous behavior, combined with his generous sympathy for his fellow men, represented the highest traditions of the profession.

The members of the association sought to carry on the traditions of courtesy and graciousness that they found admirable in their older brethren and that they had highlighted in the biographical sketches of the nineteenth-century lawyers. The minutes of the association's meetings show that a round of thanks was always voted when a member contributed a biographical sketch or organized a discussion of some topic. When an oversight had resulted in one of the older lawyers not being asked to join the fledgling association, it was voted that a member call upon him and "convey to him our sympathy, request him to sign the by-laws so that he may become a member, and that we purchase something appropriate as an expression of our feeling toward him." They noted the absences of members bedridden with illness and often bought them gifts to cheer them. They expressed their sympathies to the families of members who had died and to the members who had loved ones die. When Harry Back, Sr., was ill, for example, the minutes of the association show that "it was voted that the Secretary send to Harry Back the sentiments of the annual meeting, that is, that he was missed at the meeting and as a token or remembrance, the Secretary was authorized to purchase some appropriate article and advise Mr. Back that it is hoped in the near future that with better weather he will be able to be out and with us." The pallbearers at Harry Back's funeral years later were members of the Windham County Bar Association.

Despite the feeling of fraternity expressed by the members, there was, however, a darker side to the association. The two lawyers who did not join the association at its creation did not do so out of personal preference. Both were Jews and were not asked to join because of this fact. One of these men came up for membership a few years later, but when it was clear that he would not get the two-thirds vote needed for membership, he was allowed to withdraw his name from consideration. It was not until the 1940s, when some of the younger county lawyers who had been away in the service returned, that enough pressure was brought upon some of the entrenched members to force the issue and have the excluded county lawyers brought into the association. Ironically, one of them, Irwin Krug, later became a president of the association, and upon his death the association created the Irwin Krug Memorial.

A glimpse of one other lawyer, John King, helps one to appreciate the Windham County lawyers as a group and the country lawyers they represented. Like Sam Harvey, John King was from Willimantic. King was thirty-five years old, or approximately half of Sam Harvey's age, when the association was formed in 1935. While Sam Harvey read law

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

in an office for his training, John King had undergraduate and law degrees from Yale University. Sam Harvey spent his entire career at the bar, while John King practiced law for fifteen years after coming to the bar in 1925 before going to the bench.

John King was in full stride as a lawyer when the association was formed. When he first came to the bar, his father arranged for him to sit literally at the right hand of the experienced lawyers in the county, especially the trial lawyers, to develop his skills. This John King did quickly, and by the time of the association's beginning he was, despite his age, the most learned and skilled lawyer in the county. The men he had first known as tutors then became loyal friends. Though he was pressed for time because of his own busy practice, he always had time for other lawyers when they needed help. He went to the Superior Court bench in 1940 and treated the lawyers who appeared before him with the courtesy and the helpfulness that had marked him as a practicing lawyer. Eighteen years on the trial bench were followed by thirteen years on the Connecticut Supreme Court, the last seven as its chief justice. He wrote more than three hundred learned opinions as a judge and justice.

While cordial, personable, and helpful, both on and off the bench, John King was above all a serious man fully dedicated to the law. A bachelor throughout his life, his only hobbies were automobiles and, as a naturalist, searching out the headwaters of each of the New England rivers. He read law widely and deeply. For the four months between his appointment to the Superior Court and taking his place there, he worked ten hours a day in his office briefing the cases in the *Connecticut Reports* so that he would have his own index for the points of law he would encounter on the bench. He kept *Kent's Commentaries* next to his bed for late-night reading. His memory was legendary in the county. He could provide you with not only the name of the case but also the volume and page numbers of that case if you were stuck for a principle of law as it was first articulated by the Connecticut Supreme Court.

As for the things he loved most, law books, it was his suggestion that the association buy a legal encyclopedia for its library and that the association take out fire insurance for the books in the library. He persuaded the three Superior Court judges from Windham County when he was on the Connecticut Supreme Court to donate up to a thousand dollars each—while he donated fifteen hundred dollars himself—to pay an arrearage to law book publishers to keep the bar libraries in Putnam and Willimantic current. He also bequeathed more than one hundred thousand dollars to the State of Connecticut to help maintain these bar libraries, making, at the same time, his dissatisfaction with the current level of support sharply known in his will.

But it wasn't that King was so smart or that he was such a fine lawyer and judge that made him important to the county. It was that he maintained the country lawyer's traditions of gentility and courtesy and that he tried to pass these traditions on to the next generation. He, more than any other lawyer, with the possible exception of Justice Hinman, pushed for the biographical sketches of earlier county lawyers. It was his idea that the association put the obituary notices and sketches of its members in its records, and it was his idea to compile a list of all the county lawyers who had practiced there. When he himself became an elder, he lectured the younger lawyers on such county bar leaders as Sam Harvey and George Hinman.

If John King did not himself remind the younger county lawyers of the professional qualities valued by the founding fathers of the association, those whom he or the other founding fathers influenced did when they assumed the mantle of leadership in the county bar. Joseph Dannehy, who came to the bar in 1943, was a close friend of John King, and he himself went to both the Superior Court and Connecticut Supreme Court benches. As a trial judge, he was well known for chiding lawyers in open court when they made mistakes in their paperwork. His directive to them was that they should consult with an elder to learn the proper procedure. He wanted the old and young to intermingle so that the values of the former might pass to the latter.

Dannehy is a country lawyer in the tradition of his county predecessors. The same is true of the others who shared in the early years of the association or who had extensive contact with those who did. That the lawyer today is more a businessman than a professional bodes ill for the possibility that the values of the country lawyer will survive much longer. But

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

before they slip from view, one can memorialize the power of fraternity that most of all defined the country lawyer.

Consider the example of Irving Miron and T. Emmet Clarie. Miron, now ninety-two years old, was for many years the clerk of the Superior Court in Windham County after coming to the bar in 1918. Clarie, now seventy-two years old, has gone from rural Windham County to the United States District Court for the District of Connecticut, where he has sat now for twenty-five years and from which bench he has contributed more than two hundred opinions to our federal jurisprudence. When Miron at his Danielson retirement home was asked if the county lawyers today came by to visit, he despondently replied no. But when asked if Judge Clarie ever stopped by, he brightened and said, "Oh yes, he comes by. Oh yes. Spending thirty minutes with him is better than seeing ten physicians."

In fulfilling his obligations to the country lawyer tradition, Judge Clarie meets Pericles' test that "acts deserve acts, not words, in their honor." Judge Clarie may be a federal judge, but he is still a country lawyer in the best tradition. That he travels everyday to the U.S. Courthouse in Hartford from his Danielson home fifty miles to the east underscores that he has not neglected the nourishment of his rural county roots.

Autobiographer

PETER DAVISON

He struck an attitude, head bowed
to show us all that he had mingled freely
but not enough to hold responsible
for much. He sketched some scenes: other men acted
while he stood still, helpless to avert
any event that would lead to regrettable outcomes.
He strained to get the tone of it just right,
confessing fears of climbing, fears of storm,
and his repeated lack of influence:
to write that down seemed to relieve his mind.
He had troubled the waters of his time
sufficiently to claim a rank above
anonymous, a notch below obscure,
a name that didn't count for much, misdeeds
that made nobody mad. He chose his life
to sit well on the page, a shapely story
told well enough to publish, not to read.

✪ PETER DAVISON is a consulting editor for Houghton Mifflin and poetry editor of *The Atlantic Monthly*. "Autobiographer" will appear in *The Great Ledge*, to be published by Knopf in the fall of 1989.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Books

Paul Kennedy's Rise and Fall

EDWARD N. LUTTWAK

When the *Washington Post*, my hometown newspaper, asked for a review of Paul Kennedy's *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers* (Random House, 1987, $24.95, published in paperback by Vintage Press, 1989, $12.95), I eagerly accepted. Kennedy's writings about that greatest of historical questions, the causes of the First World War, are important scholarly works, and it was pleasing indeed that a daily newspaper would grant space for a review of his new book, which was bound to be serious historiography I assumed—a trifle too serious perhaps for the average *Post* reader. Once the page proofs arrived, I followed the reviewer's usual custom of reading the last chapters first, to gain the impulse of curiosity and identify the arguments that the earlier chapters would have to sustain. What awaited was a most unpleasant surprise: instead of neatly wrapped proofs for new and important arguments, I encountered a string of ill-founded assertions, some about the contemporary military balance, fashionable perhaps in some academic circles, but fatuous all the same. Because the subject is tiresome in its technicalities, one example will suffice. Kennedy writes:

> Many of Russia's 52,000 "main battle tanks" are the obsolescent T-54s—which would simply clog up the roads. Provided NATO has sufficient reserves of ammunition, fuel, replacement weaponry, etc., it certainly seems to be in a much better position to blunt a Soviet conventional offensive than it was in the 1950s.

✪ EDWARD N. LUTTWAK holds the Arleigh A. Burke chair in strategy at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington, D.C.

First, as a historian should be the first to recall, the great strength of the Soviet army has always been in the skillful use of its large numbers, which do not "clog up the roads" but rather sustain the attack in wave after wave, first wearing down and then outflanking an outnumbered defense. At present, the chief threat to the Western defense of Germany is precisely the great mass of lowest-category Soviet reserve units, equipped with the oldest tanks (and manned by ill-trained reservists, and poorly officered too) that would not even be ready for action until some two weeks after mobilization. By the time they would arrive at the front, those third-rate Soviet units might as well be the world's finest, because they would only encounter the remnants of NATO forces already ravaged by the attacks of Soviet first-line forces. The latter, incidentally, included more than twenty-one thousand of the very modern T-72, T-64, and T-80 tanks by 1987, as opposed to not more than eight thousand late-model tanks on the NATO side. (See Malcolm Chalmers and Lutz Unterseher's "Is There a Tank Gap?: Comparing NATO and Warsaw Pact Tank Fleets" in *International Security*, 13 [Summer 1988], p. 25.) It seems almost unnecessary to add that the old tanks still in Soviet service are not "T-54s," but rather mostly T-55s, repeatedly updated over the years.

Second, the crucial proviso about "sufficient reserves of ammunition . . . etc." ignores the fact that if the West had the troops in reserve to fight on after the first battles, the entire question of European security would be settled, and there would be no need to rely on nuclear weapons. As it is, with only the dubious prospect of reinforcements across the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

GOOD THINKING

THE PRINCE OF DARKNESS

Radical Evil and the Power of Good in History

By **JEFFREY BURTON RUSSELL**. Russell traces the evolution of the concept of the Devil from the time of the ancient Hebrews through the first centuries of the Christian era, the Middle Ages, and into our own era. $21.95

LIDDELL HART AND THE WEIGHT OF HISTORY

By **JOHN J. MEARSHEIMER**. For almost half a century Sir Basil Henry Liddell Hart was the most highly regarded writer on strategy and military matters in the English-speaking world. Mearsheimer here reexamines the career of Liddell Hart and uncovers evidence that he manipulated the facts to create a false picture of his role in the military policy debates of the 1930s. $24.95

WITH STALIN AGAINST TITO

Cominformist Splits in Yugoslav Communism

By **IVO BANAC**. Forty years ago, Stalin struck at the Communist Party of Yugoslavia, provoking the first open break in the Communist state system. Drawing on a vast range of sources, Ivo Banac assesses the split's repercussions within Yugoslavia itself. His findings radically revise some of our most basic assumptions about Tito's revolution. $32.50

GREEK BRONZE STATUARY

From the Beginnings through the Fifth Century B.C.

By **CAROL C. MATTUSCH**. Mattusch enriches our knowledge of this beloved but elusive art form in a comprehensive study of the style and techniques of bronze statuary during the Archaic and Classical periods. $37.50

THE RHETORIC OF DREAMS

By **BERT O. STATES**. States here offers a provocative new theory of the nature and function of dreaming, in the process challenging the Freudian theory of repression. $22.50

THE WITNESS AND THE OTHER WORLD

Exotic European Travel Writing, 400-1600

By **MARY B. CAMPBELL**. Campbell surveys travel writing in Europe from late antiquity to the Age of Discovery, examining the origins and development of the genre. She contends that travel writing not only documented but made possible the conquest of the peoples whom the travelers described. $29.95

CONSUMING DESIRE

Sexual Science and the Emergence of a Culture of Abundance, 1871–1914

By **LAWRENCE BIRKEN**. Birken investigates the emergence of a science of sex at the turn of the century and delivers a provocative account of the role of sexology in contemporary culture. $21.50

CORNELL

Cornell University Press • 124 Roberts Place • Ithaca, NY 14850

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

PAPERBACKS

A Vanished Present
The Memoirs of Alexander Pasternak

Edited and Translated by Ann Pasternak Slater. "A Vanished *Present*, . . . written by Boris Pasternak's younger brother, paints a colorful and detailed picture of life in the Moscow of the poet's youth."—*New York Times Book Review.* "These are incantations, summoning up a joyous past from deepest grief for a vanished world. "—*Time.* $9.95 paper

Selvages and Biases
The Fabric of History in American Culture

By **MICHAEL KAMMEN**. "Michael Kammen knows many things, but he does not know how to be dull. No living writer has called our attention to more worthwhile and previously unrecognized parts of our story."—Roger D. Kennedy, Director, National Museum of American History. $10.95 paper, $24.95 cloth

Literature and Its Theorists
A Personal View of Twentieth-Century Criticism

By **TZVETAN TODOROV**. Translated by **CATHERINE PORTER**. Part history, part confession, part manifesto, *Literature and Its Theorists* presents Todorov's bold vision of what literature is and what criticism should be. $24.95 cloth, $7.95 paper

Starting Out in the Thirties

By **ALFRED KAZIN**. *Available again in paper!* "A stunning book. . . . Perhaps the most evocative reminiscence of a vital corner of the nineteen-thirties that we are likely to get."—*New York Times.* $6.95 paper

What Is to Be Done?

By **NIKOLAI CHERNYSHEVSKY**. Translated by **MICHAEL R. KATZ**; Annotated by **WILLIAM G. WAGNER**; With an Introduction by Michael R. Katz and William G. Wagner. "No work in modern literature, with the possible exception of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, can compete with *What Is to Be Done?* in its effect on human lives and its power to make history. "—Joseph Frank in *The Southern Review.* $39.95 cloth, $12.95 paper

A Mighty Empire
The Origins of the American Revolution

By **MARC EGNAL**."Combining prodigious scholarship and subtle analysis, *A Mighty Empire* offers us a new consideration of factional division and class politics in the coming of the American Revolution."—Douglas Greenberg, Senior Executive Director, American Council of Learned Societies. $36.95 cloth, $10.95 paper

The Manly Art
Bare-Knuckle Prize Fighting in America

By **ELLIOTT J. GORN**. "Gorn is an adventurous historian with a talent for informed speculation. He has written an exciting narrative history of boxing and then gone a step further to ask a series of questions that extend his focus to the whole of nineteenth-century American culture."—*The Nation.* $24.95 cloth, $9.95 paper

The Outbreak of the Peloponnesian War

By **DONALD KAGAN**. "Kagan's book is a contribution of considerable distinction, scrupulously fair, carefully argued, and lucidly written. And, what is more, it is persuasive. . . . Kagan sets out the story in detail and with acumen. The case has been adumbrated before—but never presented with such thoroughness." —*Journal of Interdisciplinary History.* $42.50 cloth, $12.95 paper

CORNELL

Cornell University Press • 124 Roberts Place • Ithaca, NY 14850

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Atlantic (the Soviets would have to be fools to allow a huge airlift they can so easily stop), large reserve stocks of ammunition, and so on, would not help much.

Third, the final comparison by Kennedy to our defense in the 1950s is both accurate and absurd: accurate because today's Western forces are certainly much stronger than their predecessors of thirty years ago; but absurd because "in the 1950s" there was no intention of "blunting" a Soviet conventional offensive, which was instead to be met by nuclear bombardment, under the then strategy of Massive Retaliation. Hence only a thin scattering of "trip-wire" units was needed along the border, to differentiate between a casual intrusion by drunken soldiers and a full-scale Soviet attack.

There is nothing unusual in academic confusion when military matters are at issue, for they allow so little scope for elegant theorizing in the untidy multitude of their technical, tactical, and operational details. Nor is there anything unusual about the slant of the argument. Kennedy's cited sources for the East-West balance are the writings of the new breed of "military analysts" employed at such places as MIT and the Brookings Institution, earnest young men dedicated to the proposition that, because the Soviet Union is economically backward, it cannot be militarily strong either. Not for them the Marquis of Custine's famous warning of 1839 that in the Russian Empire nothing works—except the army. Relentlessly mathematical as they are, they ignore not merely the wise Marquis but all that is non-measurable, whether it is the entire history of continental Europe, so largely shaped by the successive defeats of Charles XII, Napoleon, and Hitler at the hands of more backward Russians, or such inconvenient items as the virtual certainty that any East-West war, if imaginable at all, would begin with a surprise attack that would make nonsense of their laborious computations. What was shocking to me was not one more rendition of familiar errors, but rather to find the Paul Kennedy of *The Rise and Fall of British Naval Mastery* and *The Rise of the Anglo-German Antagonism: 1860–1914* in that dubious company.

Kennedy's new book, too, featured a "rise and fall" in its title, and it, too, was written in fluent prose and was much documented. But there all similarity ended. Kennedy's earlier writings—also including *The War Plans of the Great Powers, 1880–1914*—add much illumination to the still-unsettled great debate on the causes of the First World War, the cataclysmic event in whose shadow we still live, by way of the next world war that followed so directly. Those writings are, in other words, of high scholarly significance.

Embarking on a subject that already filled libraries, whose every issue had seemingly been exhaustively examined, Kennedy did not content himself with the mere elaboration of minor points. By focusing on the Anglo-German antagonism and its imperatives, he contended with the true essence of the matter, for it was British participation that eventually transformed an inevitable European war into that unprecedented phenomenon—a *world* war—and therefore a war that would not exhaust itself as even the harshest European wars had always done, through the exhaustion of the (European) antagonists. Instead, with the British mediating their successive entry, first the Dominions, then Japan in minor key, and finally the United States joined in the fight with their fresh, vast energies, preventing the natural European outcome of a compromised peace, irremediably damaging the very structures of civilization on the Continent and leaving the wasteland in which both Hitler and Stalin would flourish.

Hence the centrality of Kennedy's chosen subject, still in need of examination when he wrote, for Britain's entry into the war was by no means a foregone conclusion. Others long before Kennedy had pointed out that a fighting alliance with France and Russia (the chief threats to the British Empire) against a Germany that was still truly strong only on land, violated both the priorities of imperial security and also the long-standing British refusal of continental commitments on any large scale, for which the small British army was of course entirely unprepared. But Kennedy's writings are the first to explain fully the fateful decision, because, instead of being detained by the last-minute mechanics, they uncover in persuasive detail the underlying cause that few would mention in 1914: Britain's sense of relentless decline vis-à-vis a more dynamic Germany, and the unvoiced desire to humble in war a nation that Britain could no longer compete with in peace. This is not the place for a more adequate summary of Kennedy's far more subtle argument, but suffice it to say that

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

after reading him on that score few are likely to remain captive to the shallow algebra according to which the German invasion of Belgium led to British participation which led to world war and catastrophe.

It is therefore the works of the earlier Kennedy that condemn his most recent book, which offers precisely such a simplistic and misleading algebra: foreign ambitions led to excess military expenditure which led to economic decline and to an eventual decline in power. Writing in the brevity of a newspaper review, I could not present the abundant evidence of a very different cause for the Spanish, British, and American "declines" that Kennedy charts in his numerous statistics, a cause quite literally more fundamental.

Nor did I anticipate that the book would become a best-seller and thus have political repercussions in propagating its misdirections. Hence in that review, after sundry compliments to the earlier Kennedy, I merely expressed my doubts on the uses of history for the purposes of prophecy—for the book, as the world now knows, predicts the decline of the United States more or less by analogy (nothing harder to predict, as the joke has it, than the future)—and I also deplored rather more forthrightly the unsoundness of its derivative military analysis.

To dispose of Kennedy's algebra as far as the contemporary United States is concerned, it suffices to glance at a few statistics. From 1951, just after the start of the Korean War, until 1972, when the last American troops were leaving Vietnam, total expenditures for national defense were never less than 6.9 percent of the gross national product, notably exceeding 10 percent from 1952 to 1959—the golden Eisenhower years of received wisdom —and exceeding 9 percent in the subsequent platinum years of the Kennedy administration until 1965. The Vietnam War followed, and after that the drastic reductions of the post-Vietnam disarmament, so that national defense amounted to 4.7 percent of the gross national product by 1979, the year in which the Carter administration decided that a moderate increase was necessary. What happened instead was the Reagan rearmament, with its allegedly drastic increases: the GNP share of national defense did rise from 5.9 percent in 1982 to a peak of 6.6 percent in 1986, before declining again to 6.2 percent at the last count. (These numbers reflect fiscal years and "National Defense" throughout not the lower Defense Department expenditures that exclude atomic energy costs, and come from the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense [Comptroller], May 1987 "National Defense Budget Estimates for FY 1988/1989," Table 7–8, pp. 128–29.) What is notable is how much lower these percentages remained as compared to the entire 1951–74 period—precisely the quarter century of supposed American ascendancy.

Further suggestion of the hollowness of Kennedy's warning of "imperial overstretch" is provided by the percentages of total public spending—federal, state, and local—claimed by national defense: 19.9 percent in 1948, at the very nadir of the post-war disarmament, more than 25 percent in each year from 1951 to 1970 (with peaks of 52.2 percent during the 1950s and 33.8 percent during the 1960s), 15 to 16 percent in the later 1970s, post-Vietnam, and then—when the Reagan administration supposedly coupled its rising military expenditures with drastic cuts in social programs—less than 19 percent. In other words, if public expenditures were eroding the strength of the American economy, less than one-fifth of those expenditures were due to imperial ambitions, or, in plain language, to the national defense account.

If Kennedy's culprit is innocent, it does not mean that no crime is being committed: there *is* ample evidence of a relative decline of the United States, manifest most clearly in the diminished income per capita of Americans as compared to Swiss and Swedes, not to speak of the Japanese. True, national income figures mean little indeed—a car accident increases them after counting in the ambulance charge, the hospital and doctor bills, the body-shop extortion, and perhaps the funeral expenses. Even more true, international comparisons are grotesquely misleading as far as true wealth and welfare are concerned: a Japanese family living in a tiny box of an apartment, enjoying seven days of holidays a year, and making a great treat out of a twenty-seven-dollar honeydew melon, would be astonished to find that its income is said to be much higher than the American average, once yens are converted to dollars at the going exchange rate.

Still, even if the numbers of any one year mean little, their trend over the years means much—and the trend has been very adverse.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

If we do not go about in rags amidst desolate streets of crumbling houses lined with abandoned automobiles that we can no longer afford to keep in fuel, one reason is, quite simply, that the trends in question are *relative*—we are much more overtaken in the statistical columns by others rather than actually slowing down ourselves—but the other reason is the increasing mountain of debt.

As everyone now knows, we are living beyond our means both as individuals, borrowing heavily from each other, and as a nation, borrowing even more heavily from foreigners who have been purchasing many of the treasury bonds that pay for the federal deficit. Of late, those foreigners have been less inclined to send us cars and video recorders in exchange for the pretty paper that the treasury prints, and they have been using their export-earned dollars to buy acres of office buildings and bushels of shares on the stock market. The supply of both is not unlimited (the value of the entire island of Manhattan hardly covers one year's trade deficit), and of course each sale to foreigners begets its own stream of rent and dividend payments that depart the country to go abroad.

Possessed as we are of the world's first bourgeoisie that does not save a goodly fraction of its income, we are becoming colonials once again, increasingly working in the factories and offices of masters overseas, paying rent to landlords overseas—except that before 1776 frugal colonials were liberating themselves from debt to British merchants and magnates, instead of adding to it year by year as we have been doing. Most recently, the foreign trade deficit of imports in excess of exports has been shrinking rather than growing, but that merely means a foreign debt that rises somewhat more slowly than before, yet rises still.

Worse, the much-awaited improvement in the trade balance has been achieved not because the quality of American products has increased, compelling buyers who want the best to buy American, but rather because prices in foreign currencies have been drastically cut by the huge devaluation of the dollar. We have not invested in the technical education, worker training, design, and new machinery that can yield products of high quality—because we had little to invest, with savings being so small a fraction of our income, virtually the lowest fraction in the entire developed world. What we have done instead is to lure foreign buyers by cheapening the dollar, and therefore cheapening our salaries and wages. Devaluation also devalues our own work. That is the road to Bangladesh, a country that also has its exports, secured by low prices made possible in turn by low wages that yield a very low standard of living. That road may be long, very long. Still, one is entitled to feel uncomfortable when headed towards a sinister destination, even if it remains far away.

But far more telling symptoms of decline are not captured by economic statistics at all; they are found instead in the nasty realities vividly revealed by our personal experience. Can anyone doubt that standards of competence and courtesy have been falling in exactly those services that a "service economy" is supposed to emphasize, whether in transport (Have you suffered through a flight recently?) or in maintenance (Have you had dealings with your friendly neighborhood plumber or electrician or carpenter or doctor?) or in education (a great service industry of notoriously rising costs and of notoriously falling standards)?

Many Americans quite rightly do not care two hoots—or even one—if Swiss, Swedes, or Japanese earn more francs, kronur, and yen than they do. A great many even accept with equanimity the wholesale disposal of American buildings, land, and industries to pay for the foibles and fripperies that we keep importing each month. But even those Americans who are entirely indifferent to all material concerns must deplore the non-material consequences of economic decline.

One need not be a Marxist ideologue to note that the cultural, and, yes, the spiritual "superstructure" tends to go as the economic structure goes. Did Athens continue to grow more human talent per square inch than any other city before or since once it was impoverished by the downfall of its trade after the fourth century? Did Florentine painters paint as well once Florentine bankers went out of business? Could the rise of German scholarship in the last century have taken place in a country becoming poorer rather than richer? For the savings of prosperous frugality pay not only for that productive investment in which we are so sadly lacking, but also for the colors and canvas of painters, the chisels and clay of sculptors, the pen and paper of poets, and the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The 1988 Phi Beta Kappa Book Awards

The Phi Beta Kappa Award in Science

INFINITE IN ALL DIRECTIONS. *Freeman Dyson. Harper & Row. $19.95.*

Citation: This book, composed of a series of lectures presented at Aberdeen, is a wide-ranging study of questions, from the most remote, which concern the origin and future of life in the whole universe, down to the practical, which concern methods of saving energy for heating and cooling the house. This is a physicist's book, although there is less of physics in it than other sciences. Its title could well be justified by the scope the book covers; however, it has a specific origin in the philosophy of Wiechert. Older writers, who wrote elegantly about science, lauded the grand simplicity of relativity and thermodynamics—Eddington is an example. However, Wiechert anticipated an infinite complexity when science was explored at smaller or larger dimensions, and this point of view is Dyson's text. He is no blind worshiper of Einstein or Von Neumann, which is a refreshing change from the typical science writer. One of the finest elements in the book is the lack of tired and predictable attitudes. It is always interesting.

The Christian Gauss Award

Beneath THE AMERICAN RENAISSANCE: THE SUBVERSIVE IMAGINATION IN THE AGE OF EMERSON AND MELVILLE. *David S. Reynolds. Knopf. $35.*

Citation: David S. Reynolds commands a breadth and thoroughness of learning and a willingness to explore the little known and unknown authors of the period of Emerson and Melville as a means of illuminating the received and the great. In *Beneath the American Renaissance* he brings to light the tradition, not only of famous names from, say, Horace to Browning, but also the matrix of more or less popular literature, from sermon and tract to what he calls "immoral didacticism," out of which the great writers of the age took what they found an affinity with and transformed. Professor Reynolds's steady and thorough argument in favor of (his term) "reconstructive criticism" is especially pertinent to our time, when a long-accepted canon and how it got to be that way are being fought over by special, as well as general, interests. As he says, "Interpretation of a text varies over time, but appreciation of a text's density and universality does not. The 'meaning' of a text lies in the richness of its texture, the emotions it stirs, the metaphysical speculations it instigates."

The Ralph Waldo Emerson Award

THE FALL OF THE HOUSE OF LABOR: THE WORKPLACE, THE STATE, AND AMERICAN LABOR ACTIVISM, 1865–1925. *David Montgomery. Cambridge University Press. $27.95.*

Citation: It is hard to find a flaw in this product of masterly research in U.S. labor history, *The Fall of the House of Labor.* David Montgomery knows more than anyone else about the variegated scenes in which laborers worthy of their hire sweated during that crucial period when the United States was changing from a rural agrarian society to a great industrial power, with consequent massive demographic changes. His book is beautifully written, deeply and extensively documented. The attention to what actually goes on at the workplace is its most distinctive mark, but it is also notable for its deep description and explanation of every level of the work force and the impact of change upon them. The account of the real effects of scientific management and Taylorism is more than revealing, and even the often-told story of the inner conflicts within the union movement and the rise and fall of Sam Gompers gains in the retelling. Central to Montgomery's account is his dispassionate examination of the question of the ideology of the labor movement, and he demonstrates that labor did not have its ideology imposed externally, but had already developed its own ideology from within in its early years. When that power to create its own ideology faltered, the decline of the House of Labor began.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

groves, courtyards, and gardens where schools of philosophers can converse.

The temptation to welcome a poorer America for the simplicity of life it might gain should therefore be firmly resisted no matter how attractive austerity may seem. An America less consumed with money-making would also be an America less productive in art and intellect.

It was the widespread evidence of unhappy realities too long overlooked that induced me to praise Kennedy's warning when testifying before Congress alongside him, as I once did, even while refuting as best I could his explanation of what has been happening. But if "imperial overstretch" is released from the dock as quite innocent, who—or rather what—is guilty? Avoiding the familiar trap, we should not look for the one great explanation, for there are several, as there always are.

What produces production? Aside from the ever-diminishing contribution of natural resources (the world is full of "resource-rich" poor countries), it is capital and labor that sustain economies, many kinds of capital, and many more kinds of labor.

Mysterious enough in its infinity of financial apparitions, from "convertible debentures" to common or garden-variety common stock, and so varied in its applications, from real machines, factories, or offices to research funds or design fees, capital begins life quite simply as money that is not spent for immediate consumption. Whether it is skillfully conveyed into fortunate investments, or merely placed in an old shoe box under the bed, money not used to claim some goody from the nearest shop creates the leftover that is capital: *we* provided some good or service to the economy, thus earning money, but we did not claim an equal quantum of goods and services. The latter therefore remain free to be employed by others to construct machines, build factories, erect office buildings, and so on. In the tribal village, the transubstantiation occurs very simply: the sweet potatoes we grow but do not eat feed some other villager, who begs, borrows, or steals our sweet potatoes to build a new hut instead of tending to his own potato patch. In our economy, credit achieves the same miracle: banks let checks be written to pay machine-builders or construction workers with bits of paper that have value because there are those unconsumed goods and services remaining to be bought.

If our national supply of capital is not large enough, the reason is not military expenditure, as we have seen, but rather *all* expenditure. Instead of producing two bushels of sweet potatoes and eating only one, we have been eating both, and then borrowing some more from the next village. And that is how we reach the first explanation that Paul Kennedy either overlooked or deliberately did not want to mention: ingrained national habits of manic consumption that fill attics and basements with quickly bought, quickly rejected goodies may reflect an insecure, rootless culture, but they are certainly encouraged by a fiscal system that taxes savings, or at least the interest and dividends they earn, while *not* taxing consumption at all heavily. Instead of the 15 to 20 percent consumption taxes of Western Europe, American sales taxes rarely exceed 5 percent.

Now of course consumption taxes are "regressive." They penalize the poor who spend almost all of their income much more than the rich who can save more; and to reduce or remove taxes on interests and dividends is just as "regressive" in making the rich even richer. Perhaps Kennedy, of whose political views I know nothing, preferred the left-wing recipe of reducing military expenditure to the right-wing cure of untaxing savings while taxing spending, but left or right as that truth may be, that is how the sweet potatoes are left over and huts can be built. There is no other way—other than the system of state ownership and central planning that Mr. Gorbachev is currently so unhappy about.

Thus we encounter the first explanation: a society that wants to be "progressive" by ensuring the highest possible consumption of the poorer among us can only pay for that consumption by taxing the "unearned" income of the richer folk who would not spend much of that money anyway if it were not taxed, precisely in their quest to become even richer. The thought that the by-now world-famous "junk-bond" dealer who received five hundred million dollars in fees should be taxed less, while a janitor raising a family on twelve thousand dollars should be taxed more, is quite properly repugnant—but that is *not* what capital accumulation requires.

The junk-bond dealer can be taxed on his "earned" income much more heavily than now, so long as the interests and dividends he receives from his savings are less taxed. In

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

RUIN THE SACRED TRUTHS

Poetry and Belief from the Bible to the Present

Harold Bloom

In his first book in five years, Harold Bloom surveys the literature of the West from the Old Testament to Samuel Beckett.

"Perhaps [his] most accessible book, and probably his most enduring: a bounty of coy surprises and typical leaps of brilliance."—*Kirkus Reviews*

Charles Eliot Norton Lectures

$20.00 cloth

PEACEMAKING AMONG PRIMATES

Frans de Waal

Does biology condemn humans to violence and war? In this fascinating account of aggression and reconciliation strategies among our closest animal relatives, primatologist Frans de Waal demonstrates that peacemaking and forgiveness are widespread among non-human primates. Confrontation serves not as a barrier to sociality, but as an essential element in building social bonds—an aspect of primate studies that should stimulate much-needed work on human conflict resolution.

$29.95 cloth/86 halftones

A LIFE FOR NEW MUSIC

Selected Papers of Paul Fromm

Edited by David Gable and Christoph Wolff

Paul Fromm (1906–1987), in the course of his thirty-five years as America's premiere patron of contemporary music, scrutinized the problems encountered by contemporary music on its road to acceptance. In this collection of essays, he asks why the composer is relegated to second-class citizenship and he offers imaginative solutions to this problem that will be of interest to music institutions, scholars, and students.

$24.95 cloth

MUSIC AND THE HISTORICAL IMAGINATION

Leo Treitler

"Subtle, trenchant, and broad-ranging, [this] is a major contribution to a field starved of historical and critical theory."—Joseph Kerman

In this provocative look at what music analysis and criticism in relation to historical understanding can be, Leo Treitler decries the music historian's goal of objectivity and the practice of construing works of the past as moments in a historical process.

$35.00 cloth

A HISTORY OF PRIVATE LIFE

Philippe Ariès and Georges Duby, General Editors

VOLUME III: PASSIONS OF THE RENAISSANCE

Edited by Roger Chartier

Translated by Arthur Goldhammer

The third sumptuous volume in this award-winning series celebrates the emergence of individualism during the Renaissance. An impressive host of historians examine changing facets of private life from friendship, childrearing, and sexuality to table etiquette and dress.

"The wealth of materials is impressive, and Arthur Goldhammer's skillful translation captures the contributors' voices...Lavishly illustrated with well-captioned reproductions."—*Kirkus Reviews*

Belknap

$39.50 cloth/16 color, 426 b/w halftones

Available at bookstores or from

Harvard University Press

79 Garden Street
Cambridge, MA 02138
(617) 495-2480

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

both Sweden and Switzerland, with their very high income taxes, the paradox has long been accepted: what is virtuously earned can be taken away, so long as that other income received by mere coupon clipping is left less taxed.

Can the paradox navigate through the simplicities of one-slogan politics in the United States Congress? Who knows, but until it does, the buying of automobiles and major appliances will remain a favorite indoor sport, and so will borrowing to spend even more (it was only most recently that tax deductions for credit-card loans and such were abolished, finally removing that perverse encouragement of profligacy).

Labor means trained labor nowadays, and there also "progressive" aims have ravaged the economy. If in tax matters the great form of progression is inequality, with the rich paying more than the poor, in education it is the most perfect equality possible, or at least that simulacrum of equality manifest in the older aim of giving everyone a high school diploma, and the more recent aim of giving everyone a degree. One schoolchild is interested in cars and motorcycles and could most usefully be taught how to become a skilled mechanic in a secondary trade school; another schoolchild is interested in *how* car and motorcycle engines work and could usefully be taught how to draw blueprints and rig a test bed in a secondary technical school; a third schoolchild is interested in the physical principles of internal combustion engines, and he could usefully be taught physics in a secondary scientific school—but in the United States, at present, all three are forced into the same classroom, where what is taught is not practical enough for the first child, not specific enough for the second, and not advanced enough for the third. The trade and technical schools of Western Europe are virtually absent (a few remain from the past), and so are high schools that are truly high in their scholarly standards.

Social pressure and public policies alike now drive all students into so-called higher education unworthy of that name, where most can only fiddle with the outward procedures of scholarship. That most students should attend seriously professional technical colleges of one sort or another, instead of filling the lecture halls of four-year colleges where they learn odd phrases and read bits of this or that, may be "regressive" indeed, but it would also provide the nation with badly needed technical cadres, while restoring uncompromised scholarship to universities worthy of the name.

Again Kennedy, though himself a teacher, failed to uncover this more fundamental cause of decline: how can there not be decline when the new entrants to an increasingly "knowledge-based" economy do not have increasing knowledge—real knowledge, that is. I do not mean thereby "relevant" knowledge, to cite that thoroughly wrongheaded qualifier, or knowledge of immediate commercial value—there is as much need of English literature as of mechanical engineering in a sophisticated society, and indeed in a sophisticated economy—but quite simply knowledge as such, as opposed to modish affirmations.

International comparisons prove beyond all doubt that the decisive factor in higher educational standards is, precisely, higher educational standards—that is, more demanding *exams*. There is absolutely no correlation between money in and education out from country to country, but there is a very definite correlation between the difficulty of exams at each level and final results. Faced by a stiff exam that controls admission to secondary education, the schoolchild who aspires to it will study hard, even if in a dingy classroom with an overburdened teacher; faced by a stiffer exam that controls entry to higher education, the aspiring student will study into the night, every night.

Capital and Labor, both inadequate because of dysfunctional social aims, are the fundamental causes of decline overlooked in Kennedy's book: inadequate as in Spain, when fields were neglected by the aristocratic pretensions of even one-acre landlords, and when work was held dishonorable for that same reason; as in Britain when the capital of ironmasters went into the construction of stately homes instead of steel mills, and when all social pressure kept the best minds away from "trade"—and as in the contemporary United States.

Certainly *The Rise and Fall* would not have been the best-seller it was had it pointed to painful fiscal and educational cures. Its great attraction was precisely that trenchant diagnosis was followed by a quite painless therapy. But then the new Paul Kennedy would have

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ExceptionalTimes

THE ANTI-WARRIOR
A Memoir
By Milt Felsen

A rousing account of Felsen's activities in the Spanish Civil War and World War II, where he helped form the O.S.S. A committed anti-war activist, Felsen impulsively joined both battles and questioned each throughout his involvement. This is "a wonderful book, filled with rare joy and zest for living." — *Howard Fast.*
22 photos. $24.95 cloth, $9.95 paper

THE WAR AGAINST THE INTELLECT
Episodes on the Decline of Discourse
By Peter Shaw

"Mr. Shaw's collection of essays presents in a convincing manner a thesis of great importance. . . . Its qualities are many and rare in modern scholarship." — *Jacques Barzun.*
$22.50 cloth, $10.95 paper, available in April

THAT RED WHEELBARROW
Selected Literary Essays
By Robert Coles

A splendid volume of literary essays and reviews on writers Dickens, Hardy, Orwell, Agee, and many more. "Expands appreciation of even the most well-known writers. . . . Readers will find much to delight and provoke them in this collection." — *Kirkus.*
$24.95

LiteraryLives

SHAW
Interviews and Recollections
Edited by A. M. Gibbs

George Bernard Shaw was one of the most outspoken playwrights of his age. These interviews bear the stamp of his provocative personality and range over theatrical, social, economic, and political topics.
16 photos. $35.00, available in June

ARTHUR SYMONS
Selected Letters, 1880-1935
Edited by Karl Beckson and John M. Munro

This first published volume of Symons' letters presents correspondence with an extraordinary variety of literary and artistic figures, including Joseph Conrad, James Joyce, Edmund Gosse, Thomas Hardy, and W. B. Yeats.
20 photos, 4 drawings. $35.00

PHILIP LARKIN
The Man and His Work
Edited by Dale Salwak

A widely based tribute to Larkin by Kingsley Amis, Anthony Curtis, David Lodge, and many others. This fine volume will be an important companion to Larkin's letters and poetry.
16 photos. $19.95

LEWIS CARROLL
Interviews and Recollections
Edited by Morton N. Cohen

A captivating volume in which Carroll is recalled by his teachers, friends, relatives, and pupils. The record of Carroll as people knew him — he stands here revealed as nowhere else.
$24.95, available in May

University of Iowa Press
Iowa City, Iowa 52242

We accept Visa & MasterCard
Call (319) 335-8777

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

kept faith with the old, and historical scholarship would not have witnessed the defection of one of its outstanding practitioners.

Why Do the Wrong People Travel?

THE NORTON BOOK OF TRAVEL. *Edited by Paul Fussell. Norton. $19.95.*

Reviewed by PETER DAILEY

Ruminating on man's restless nature and his apparently ineluctable urge for exploration, Robert Burton looked skyward: "The heavens themselves run continually round, the sun riseth and sets, the moon increaseth, stars and planets keep their constant motions, the air is still tossed by the winds . . . to teach us that we should ever be in motion." Regardless of whether the impulse lies with our stars or with ourselves, men have always traveled. Travel writing, however, has rarely been a by-product. Although accounts from antiquity and the High Renaissance survive, for most of history, individuals or migrating peoples left no description of where they had been or what they had seen.

Most of the travel writing that has come down to us was composed during the hundred and fifty years of England's and France's imperial expansion and decline. Throughout that period an enormous audience existed for travel narratives, books of exploration, and the accounts of merchants, missionaries, and scholars. Works as dissimilar as Arthur Young's *Travels in France and Italy,* Richard Burton's *First Footsteps in East Africa,* and J. R. Ackerley's *Hindoo Holiday* all reflected this abiding interest. Few authors of consequence failed to write a travel account of one sort or another. Such narratives, however, rarely represented the very best of which a writer was capable: Dickens, after all, is remembered for *Our Mutual Friend* rather than *Pictures from Italy,* Henry James for *The Golden Bowl,* not *A Little Tour in France.* While the experience of travel occasioned a notable amount of original and distinctive work, at their most pedestrian, travel books exhibited a remorseless literal-mindedness rarely encountered in other forms of imaginative writing, a characteristic that Evelyn Waugh could deftly satirize in *When the Going Was Good:*

> I do not think I shall ever forget the sight of Etna at sunset; the mountain almost invisible in a blur of pastel grey, glowing on the top and then repeating its shape, as though reflected, in a wisp of grey smoke, with the whole horizon behind radiant with pink light, fading gently into a grey pastel sky. Nothing I have ever seen in Art or Nature was quite so revolting.

In *The Norton Book of Travel,* Paul Fussell has collected excerpts from the travel accounts, diaries, letters, and novels of approximately fifty different writers. He has also included such poems as Thomas Hardy's "Midnight on the Great Western" and A. E. Housman's "Into My Heart an Air That Kills," which, while not concerned with travel, reflect some of the attitudes and sentiments that informed travel writing. This collection, although imaginatively and intelligently edited, contains no startling choices, no works rescued from neglect, indeed little that is unfamiliar or unavailable elsewhere. After suggesting some of the genre's antecedents with passages from writers like Strabo, Pausanias, and Sir John Mandeville, Fussell devotes the heart of his anthology to the accounts of literary figures, almost exclusively English and American, from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The deliberate omission of such literary travelers as Flaubert, Goethe, Gide, Montaigne, Hugo, Gérard De Nerval, Stendhal, Taine, Gautier, Malraux, and Lamartine is difficult to justify, but in general the focus of Mr. Fussell's attention is not misplaced.

What we now think of as the genre of travel writing had its origins in the Grand Tour, an institution that reached its fullest expression in the eighteenth century. Young men of the nobility and upper middle class, on coming down from Oxford or Cambridge, were dispatched for a year or so of traveling on the Continent, accompanied by a tutor, or "bear-leader" as they were known colloquially. Diligent observation of foreign customs and institutions, the study of languages, and the opportunity for prolonged and easy intercourse with the cultivated classes were expected to remedy some of the deficiencies of a

✪ PETER DAILEY is a writer and attorney living in New York City.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THE UNIVERSITY
OF CHICAGO PRESS
congratulates

Robert J. Richards
recipient of the 1988 Pfizer Prize
awarded by the
History of
Science Society
for

DARWIN AND THE
EMERGENCE OF EVOLUTIONARY
THEORIES OF MIND AND BEHAVIOR

"Richards's book is now the obvious introduction to the history of ideas about mind and behaviour in the nineteenth century." — Mark Ridley, *Times Literary Supplement*

"Not since the publication of Michael Ghiselin's *The Triumph of the Darwinian Method* has there been such an ambitious, challenging, and methodologically self-conscious interpretation of the rise and development of evolutionary theories and Darwin's role therein." — John C. Greene, *Science*

Cloth $34.95 712 pages 37 halftones
***Science and Its Conceptual Foundations* series**

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

provincial education and outlook and to prepare the young travelers for later responsibilities.

Starting at M. Dessin's Hotel d'Angleterre in Calais, the young men made their way in easy stages along the post road to Boulogne and Amiens and on to Paris, which they quitted for Italy only with the greatest reluctance. The eighteenth-century traveling party descended into Savoy, stopping at Turin, and from there to Milan, and on to Rome. Although young Englishmen were expected to abjure all unnecessary contact with their numerous fellow countrymen abroad, this was rarely practicable. Rome in particular had a sizable English colony; coffeehouses supplied English newspapers, and several inns were patronized almost exclusively by English students. The tour finished up at Naples with visits to the newly excavated ruins at Pompeii and Herculaneum and a trip to the summit of Vesuvius to peer into the crater. Travelers would return, stopping at Weimar, Saxony, and Brunswick as well as other princely courts that had a tradition of hospitality toward well-born English visitors, and visiting Carlsbad, Wiesbaden, and other fashionable spas.

Although few travelers brought back more than the inevitable genre portrait of themselves in front of the Coliseum, a small number of exceptional travelers were changed in profound ways. Robert Adam, returning to London in 1764, imparted to its architecture something of the southern classical spirit. Gibbon's famous words describing his stay in Rome recall that "it was on the fifteenth of October in the gloom of the evening as I sat musing on the Capitol, while the barefoot fryars were chanting their litanies in the temple of Jupiter, that I conceived the first thought of my history."

With the end of the Napoleonic Wars, continental Europe was once more open to travelers; and with the development of the railroad over the next half century, formerly remote regions became more accessible. The stream of travelers quickly spread beyond its earlier confines and into the Near East, Africa, and Asia. The earliest of these showed a remarkable single-mindedness and capacity for enduring hardship. Joseph Wolff, the celebrated Anglican missionary, who journeyed through Central Asia and the Near East on behalf of the Society for Promoting Christianity Amongst the Jews, distributing copies of *Robinson Crusoe* in Arabic, was repeatedly set upon and taken prisoner. He was horsewhipped by Wahabites in Abyssinia; bastinadoed, stripped, and flogged by Turkoman bandits who dragged him across the desert tied to a horse's tail; and forced by Afghan tribesmen to make his way stark naked for two hundred miles through the snowbound Hindu Kush. Retiring at the age of forty-five to a rural parsonage in Somerset, which he thereafter showed no inclination to leave, Wolff devoted the rest of his life to eccentric theological speculation and to raising a large family.

By the middle of the nineteenth century, it was possible to go from London to Rome in sixty hours, and around the world in less time than it had taken to go to Naples and back a hundred years earlier. Journeys that were once remarkable were now commonplace. In 1867, when Mark Twain sailed to the Holy Land (a cruise that was interrupted in Jaffa to take on one hundred and sixty Maine farmers who had gone there to await the Second Coming), he estimated that four or five thousand Americans were departing for Europe weekly. This period, which Paul Fussell characterizes as the "heyday" of travel writing, is particularly well documented in *The Norton Book of Travel*. "For the first time in history," notes Fussell, "travel was convenient, and ships and trains took you where you wanted to go. At the same time, mass tourism, with its homogenizing simplifications and conveniences, had not yet displaced genuine, individual, eccentric travel."

Fussell has sought to illustrate the rise and decline of bourgeois travel and how its possibilities have gradually been extinguished by modern tourism. He emphasizes the act of travel, rather than the travelers themselves or what they saw and experienced. Although this perspective yields some interesting insights, the picture it presents is incomplete. Not all English travelers embarked on their journeys with a detective novel and railway timetable in hand. One need only to think of C. M. Doughty, T. E. Lawrence, George Borrow, Sir Richard Burton, Wilfrid Scawen Blunt, or contemporary travelers like Wilfred Thesiger or Redmond O'Hanlon to see the limitations of such an approach.

That tourism has made travel as it used to be experienced no longer possible is less an

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

idea to be analyzed or disputed than it is an emblem of the romantic temperament. Grumbling about the baneful and injurious effect of one's fellow countrymen abroad is a convention of travel writing, one that Nöel Coward expressed in a particularly incisive manner:

> Millions of tourists are churning up the gravel
> While they gaze at St. Peter's dome.
> But why oh why do the wrong people travel
> When the right people stay at home.

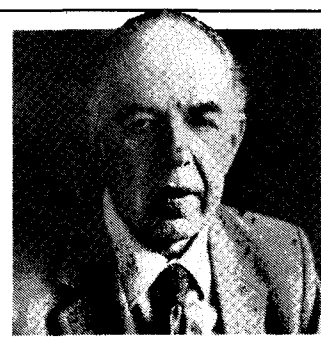
It is similar to another persistent theme of travel writing—the lament that a particular place is about to be irretrievably ruined. Horace Walpole gave voice to this particular sentiment in a letter in 1740, remarking, "I am very glad that I see Rome while it yet exists: before a great number of years are elapsed, I question whether it will be worth seeing."

The fact is that even tourism takes on a patina with time and is recognized as part of a larger pattern of cultural interconnection. The photographs of English army officers on camelback posing in front of the Sphinx, the initials that Byron and other nineteenth-century travelers carved on the Temple at Sounion, the pensiones full of English spinsters and clergymen chaperones that E. M. Forster describes in his early novels, all enhance our interest in these places. Were not the Montparnasse cafés that American expatriates patronized in the twenties among the first places sought out by literary-minded visitors to Paris?

It is not as if Fussell does not recognize the genre's problematical aspects. In *Abroad: British Literary Travel Between the Wars* (1980), Fussell attempted to describe "that tributary of fiction narrated in the first person that we call travel books." On one level the travel narrative resembles the myth of the heroic quest, in which the hero, journeying to a far country, submits to a trial by ordeal from which he emerges apotheosized. On another level the travel narrative shares some of the characteristics of the traditional pastoral romance, depicting the noble traveler in a harmonious relationship with a simple and idyllic society. This pastoral aspect is enhanced by a temporal as well as spatial displacement. To go from northern industrial countries into predominantly agricultural societies was a journey backwards to a simpler form of social

RENAISSANCE ESSAYS
Hugh Trevor-Roper

"The historical essay is a valuable, distinctive art form, and Trevor-Roper is its undisputed master. . . . These different pieces, all of them linking cultural and intellectual history with society and politics, bristle with erudition and insight."
—Geoffrey Parker, *American Scholar*
Paper $16.95 (est.) 320 pages



NEW LIGHT ON OLD MASTERS
Studies in the art of the Renaissance IV
E. H. Gombrich

In this original collection of recent essays Gombrich discusses the ways in which the great artists of the High Renaissance both accepted and satirized the canon they inherited from their own masters and passed on to their students.
Paper $17.50 192 pages
6 color plates, 157 halftones

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO PRESS *5801 South Ellis Avenue, Chicago, IL 60637*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

organization. And when the destination was the remains of some classical civilization, the imaginative journey spanned centuries rather than generations.

A more concrete aspect of travel writing, according to Fussell, is its "implicit quest for anomalies," a quest predicated on the traveling Englishmen's "supreme confidence that one knows what is 'normal.'" To Edith Sitwell, the celebrated eighteenth-century traveler Capt. Philip Thicknesse displayed "that peculiar and satisfactory knowledge of infallibility which is the hallmark and birthright of the English nation." As he made his way across the Continent in a cabriolet, accompanied by Mrs. Thicknesse, his two daughters, and a pigtailed monkey in livery, Thicknesse complained of being "scurvily treated" by the people he encountered and described for his English readers the depravity of the French and their cruelty to animals.

There was little about the Continent to recommend it to fastidious Englishmen. The habit of French women of spitting in public caused Horace Walpole to call them a "parcel of Tritons." Tobias Smollett noted that the inhabitants of Boulogne were "utter strangers to what we call common decency; and I could give you some high-flavored instances, at which even a native of Edinburgh would stop his nose." After obliging his readers with several striking examples, he complained that the difference of custom was no excuse for "those usages which cannot fail giving disgust to the organs and senses of all mankind."

Although not all comparisons were invidious, they were invariably distorting. Even when the literary traveler was charmed by what he saw, he insisted on its foreignness. For Goethe, the Neapolitans lived "in a sort of intoxicated self-forgetfulness," which his stern German disposition prevented him from fully entering into, in spite of his active admiration. Naples seemed part of a different moral landscape.

In his earlier book, *Abroad,* Fussell examined some of the enlivening contradictions of travel writing and argued that it was a self-contained literary form less akin to reportage than to the novel, whose development it in many ways paralleled. His comments in *The Norton Book of Travel* are considerably more perfunctory. What is missing in each of Fussell's books is some awareness of the way both the enterprise of travel and that of travel writing were bound up in the cultural expansion of the great powers. Almost without exception, literary travel was an activity carried out by the nationals of great powers in the territory of weaker ones. In the nineteenth century, British, French, or American nationality was almost a necessary condition of authorship, and though there was plenty of traffic the other way, it was not the sort that produced books.

Throughout Fussell's consideration of travel and travel writing runs a persistent elegiac note. To what extent is this justified? Obviously, many large and fundamental changes have taken place over the last thirty years in the societies that English and American travelers formerly visited, many of them deleterious. The deterioration of the environment is often remarked on: clouds of smog from auto exhaust have settled over places like Rio de Janeiro and Naples. The populations of cities as different as Mexico City and Istanbul have quadrupled because of migration from the countryside; new cities marked by an "international" style of architecture have sprung up around old ones, ruining skylines and views. The spread of the more meretricious aspects of American popular culture, which has been exhaustively documented, continues unchecked. The post–World War II economy has been transformed, so one of the major incentives to travel—to enjoy a drastically undervalued currency—no longer obtains. So despite the fact that such societies often exhibit a vitality and capacity to renew themselves, many travelers have a list of places to which it is unlikely they will return.

About the future of travel writing there is reason to be less than sanguine. Jet travel and direct satellite transmission have outstripped the travel writer's ability to present the exotic in an immediate and novel way. The decline in audience has presumably contributed to the decline of this particular type of literary activity. To be sure, travel narratives continue to be written, and in the best of them—those by writers like V. S. Naipaul, Bruce Chatwin, or Jonathan Raban—foreign countries are not merely places to be described or misapprehended, but are instead what they were for great predecessors like Nerval, Flaubert, or Alexander Kinglake: a backdrop against which private and public myths are played out.

Finally, the age of air travel has brought the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

faraway close, planting at our doorsteps the very anomalies and discontinuities that travelers once journeyed hard and long to discover. In midtown New York, Senegalese with tribal scars squat on the pavements over a box of cheap umbrellas. A jogger in Central Park is apt to come across a dead rooster, sacrificed by Haitian emigrés in a religious ceremony. As Evelyn Waugh noted in his diary in 1962, "It was fun thirty-five years ago to travel far and in great discomfort to meet people whose entire conception of life and manner of expression was alien. Now one has only to leave one's gates."

Annotating on a Volcano

J. G. FRAZER: HIS LIFE AND WORK. *By Robert Ackerman. Cambridge University Press. $39.95.*

Reviewed by BURTON FELDMAN

No book before James G. Frazer's *The Golden Bough* of 1890 had shown in such massive and vivid detail the primitive rituals and mythic psychology underlying our accepted institutions, religions, and science. That book, Frazer said, took up the "epic of humanity" from magic to religion to science, focusing primarily on the earliest and least-known stages. The comparative evidence he assembled was indeed epic in scale, crisscrossing continents and all history, and linking classical antiquity to the superstitions of nineteenth-century European peasants, obscure African tribes to venerable Old Testament figures, Norse heroes to Australian aborigines. Frazer's work propelled him through two extraordinary reputations. By the twenties, through his many-volumed studies of totemism, ritual sacrifice, vegetation spirits, and sacred kingship, he was the most celebrated anthropologist in the discipline, anthropology itself, he had helped found. But his overthrow was already well under way. Lang and Marett, Boas, Durkheim, Mali-

✪ BURTON FELDMAN, professor of English at the University of Denver, is the author of *Rise of Modern Mythology, 1680–1860.* His reviews have appeared in *Commentary, Dissent,* and other journals.

The 64th Annual • August 15-27, 1989

BREAD LOAF WRITERS' CONFERENCE

Robert Pack, *Director*

Fiction: Rosellen Brown, Nicholas Delbanco, Thomas Gavin, Marianne Gingher, Richard Hawley, Ann Hood, Robert Houston, David Huddle, Margot Livesey, Tim O'Brien, Bob Reiss, Lore Segal, Jim Shepard, Sharon Stark, Nancy Willard, Hilma Wolitzer.

Poetry: Marvin Bell, Carol Frost, Richard Jackson, Donald Justice, William Matthews, Carole Oles, Robert Pack, Linda Pastan, Wyatt Prunty, Ellen Bryant Voigt.

Nonfiction: Ron Powers, Don Mitchell.

For information and application materials, please write to:

Mrs. Carol Knauss
The Bread Loaf
Writers' Conference
Middlebury College - AM
Middlebury VT 05753
or call (802) 388-3711, Ext. 5286

FELLOWSHIPS:

Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences

The Center solicits nominations of distinguished or exceptionally promising scholars in the behavioral sciences, humanities, and related fields. Nominations are accepted at any time from any member of the academic community, including academic deans and department heads. Fellowship arrangements are normally completed nine to eighteen months before period of residence. Current sources of Federal support include the national Endowment for the Humanities and the National Science Foundation.

Send nominations to:
Robert A. Scott
Associate Director
202 Junipero Serra Boulevard
Stanford, CA 94305

The Center accepts Fellows of any race, color and national or ethnic origin.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

nowski, Radcliffe-Brown, and a flood of others newly stressed what Frazer cared little about—social function, historical particularism, the inner complexity of archaic belief and thought. The charge began to mount that Frazer did not so much explain the primitive world as explain it away. His grand comparative method could seem a leaky analogical contrivance; his description of the benighted savage mind, a rationalist cartoon of the real thing. Frazer's Victorian intellectualism gave way to twentieth-century methods, meanings, and misgivings.

But if a scientific modernism toppled the Victorian ethnologist, a more radical modernism awarded him his second and more enduring reputation. This is the Frazer who powerfully helped to ignite popular modern interest in myth and ritual, in the lure of the archaic. From the twenties on, his name was conjured alongside Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud as one of the potent disturbers of modern self-confidence. His dying gods and ritually slain kings won a second, fertile life in the writings of Eliot, Joyce, and D. H. Lawrence. But early high modernism has receded, and critical attention to Frazer is now apt to be retrospective.

Frazer died in 1941, and it thus comes as a surprise that Robert Ackerman's fine biography is also the first serious life study of a man who was himself such an icon. The only previous account was an inaccurate and tidied version written in 1940 by Frazer's secretary under the sharply protective eye of Frazer's wife. Ackerman's biography will remain the definitive one. Frazer as we meet him here is monastically retiring and obsessively industrious—and rather touching. He seemed scarcely to have noticed his great fame except as an annoying distraction from his compulsive labors. Unlike other intellectual movers and shakers, he was chastely immune to power or to enviousness. He gathered no disciples and trained not a single student. William James met and described him as "a sucking babe of humility, unworldliness and molelike sightlessness to everything but *print*." Year after year, twelve hours a day and seven days a week, Frazer immured himself in his library, insisting on ever-more silence while he annotated learned books to write his even more learned books.

Ackerman remarkably succeeds in giving this self-effacing writing machine a human face. The high point, the "happiest days" of Frazer's life, arrived when he was thirty, in his intense and liberating friendship with the great Semitic scholar W. Robertson Smith (who also converted the young classicist Frazer to anthropology). Smith died in 1894, and no one else ever touched Frazer so deeply. Two years later, aged forty-two, he married (for the first time) a socially ambitious French widow who mothered him and often stage-managed his career. That the Cambridge bachelor and bookworm Frazier married a "difficult" foreigner (with two teenaged children) is the major surprise the biography offers. But other unexpected glimpses occur. He was carried away by Heine's poetry, presumably including the stark deathbed verse, and he loved Cowper. For all his obliviousness to worldly events, he could erupt passionately to denounce Russian pogroms.

If the inner Frazer is hard to see whole, Frazer's lifework has, on the contrary, usually been sliced up to fit disciplinary emphases. There is Frazer the ethnologist, the myth-and-ritualist, the historian of religion, the literary influence, the classical scholar. One of the great merits of Ackerman's intellectual biography is that he rejects dismantling his subject, and his is the most comprehensive and penetrating overview now available of Frazer's work. Certainly the bulk involved is daunting; few besides his biographer will likely read patiently through the enormous corpus that varies from the two thousand pages of *Totemism and Exogamy* to the tidbit items of *Sir Roger de Coverley and Other Pieces* (in mock-Addisonian style) or *Passages from the Bible* ("chosen for their literary beauty and interest"). Frazer's books ballooned from conception to publication, from edition to edition. *The Golden Bough* started as two volumes in 1890, grew to three in 1900, and distended stupefyingly to twelve in 1915, with an "aftermath" volume added later. His commentary on Pausanias's ancient travel book was originally intended as a pocket guide for tourists, but ended as a six-volume blockbuster.

What survives from it all is disputed by Frazerians. The defense splits between science and art. I. C. Jarvie maintains that Frazer may have been wrong about everything but remains valuable for his conception of anthropology as a universalizing comparative sociol-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

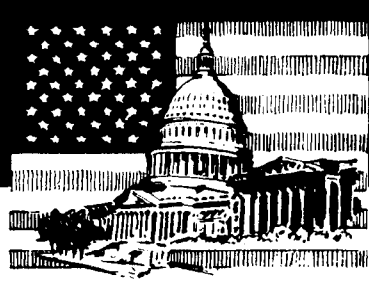
ogy and for his style and his "exhilarating anti-religiousness." Northrop Frye is also uninterested in whether Frazer's evidence was historically valid: "*The Golden Bough* purports to be a work of anthropology but it has had more influence on literary criticism than [on its] alleged field, and it may yet prove to be really a work of literary criticism." Ackerman, who is a literary historian, interestingly suggests instead that Frazer will last primarily as a classical scholar, as the commentator on Pausanias, and as the editor of Apollodorus and of Ovid's *Fasti* (typical Frazer: two thousand pages, one volume of text and four of commentary and apparatus). And, of course, there is *The Golden Bough*.

Ackerman's view of Frazer as a classical scholar turned anthropologist is illuminating. Frazer's innovation as a classicist was to bring anthropological evidence to bear on classical texts, hitherto glossed philologically or historically. Conversely, as Ackerman shows, he broke new ground in anthropology by carrying philologic habits over to that discipline. His library mania reflects not a disdain for fieldwork—he relied on that and encouraged it and wanted to go on Haddon's expedition to New Guinea in 1895—but the philologist's desire to command all the relevant sources before launching any interpretation. The classical texts are finite; but the ethnologic sources, alas for Frazer, were never-ending. His reading and his recycling of editions swallowed him up.

Frazer's anthropological detractors (and Ackerman allies himself with them) rightly complain that Frazer as a theorist is narrow and often inflexible and, at the same time, indulgently conjectural. Still, lifting his theories out of their thousands of pages of examples distorts Frazer's mind and writing. Reading Frazer is often like moving at a slow pace through a forest of illustrations, vivid yet curiously repetitive, laced with ironic bypaths and conceptual explanations. The result, particularly in *The Golden Bough*, hovers strangely between science and art. Ackerman shrewdly notes how the opening of that book, with Turner's landscape as a frame to the ensuing work of historical science, expresses Frazer's pull between the contrary claims of science and literature. He wanted a book with

American Studies Program

BAYLOR UNIVERSITY
WACO, TEXAS



Designed to produce a comprehensive knowledge of American institutions and culture, the American Studies Program at Baylor University offers both an undergraduate major and a Master of Arts degree. Located in central Texas, Baylor is a private, Christian institution operating on the principle that there is no substitute for a broad exposure to the intellectual and spiritual values of one's culture. Graduate fellowships are available for qualified candidates. For further information about the American Studies Program at Baylor University, write to J. R. LeMaster, Director, American Studies Program, Baylor University, Waco, Texas 76798.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the excellences of both, but he may have produced only a hybrid. Harry Levin once described *The Golden Bough* as among the world's great unclassifiable books, along with *Sartor Resartus*, *Finnegans Wake*, and *The Anatomy of Melancholy*.

At the end, Frazer's theoretic limitations brought *The Golden Bough* to inner confusion as a scientific work. By the third edition, he admitted that its main exhibits—the priest of Nemi watchfully circling his grove, sword in hand, and Balder, and the golden bough itself—lacked evidence. Each was a rhetorical pretext to discuss other, larger matters. But Ackerman fairly judges that Frazer was unable to explain coherently what the work is in fact supposed to be about. The coherence of *The Golden Bough* gone, the work turned into a disorderly museum of exhibits, and the hypotheses became metaphors for poems like *The Waste Land*.

Frazer seems not to have paid the slightest attention to modernist mythic-literary interest. He ignored all that, just as he ignored his near contemporaries Nietzsche and Freud, whose work clearly had problematic affinities with his own. Frazer could, however, acknowledge that the Victorian solidities of progress and reason were endangered. Civilization itself, shaped by the rationality of a very few and the superstitiousness of all the rest, is seriously threatened by the inextinguishable "savage ignorance" within us. "We appear to be standing on a volcano whose eruption may at any time devastate civilization." But he did not let the possible end of "the lugubrious history of humanity" interfere with his vast collations of facts.

His own anthropological research, of course, helped raise this barbarism to new sight and dignity. That was a bleak ironic outcome of all his labors, an irony that might be named after Pierre Bayle, the encyclopedic Enlightenment predecessor of Frazer, who gives a striking earlier example of it. Almost two centuries before *The Golden Bough*, and in skeptical Frazerian spirit, Bayle in his free-ranging *Dictionary* sought to slay myth by dramatizing its bizarre, lawless, and indecent side. But his lively examples only aroused new interest in the myths he intended to demolish, and lent them a new piquancy, prominence, and, finally, seriousness. The young Frazer, in his first anthropological publication, spoke of primitive taboos as the parent of "sour crabs and empty husks of popular superstitions on which the swine of modern society are still content to feed." But if primitive religion—and taboo and myth and the rest of it—are portentous matters now, Frazer contributed more than anyone to that turnabout. That being so, *The Golden Bough* will continue to be read, if only—as R. R. Marett, Frazer's anthropological contemporary, delicately put it—as "part of what every schoolboy knows, and what every gentleman must at least have forgotten."

The Unexamined Life

COMING TO TERMS. *By Henry F. May. University of California Press. $25.*

Reviewed by THOMAS NIEMAN

In *Enemies of Promise* Cyril Connolly noted the rarity in modern times of any book surviving much beyond a decade. Henry F. May has written such a book in his historical study of the years from 1912 to 1917, *The End of American Innocence* (1959), a work that has the standing of a small classic. The recent publication of May's memoirs, *Coming to Terms*, offers the occasion to revisit his well-known history in the light of his entire career.

Central to *The End of American Innocence* is the premise that a cultural revolution took place in America during the years 1912 to 1917. The staid America of William Dean Howells and William James became, in a matter of a few years, the America of Floyd Dell, Emma Goldman, and John Reed. Remnants of the nineteenth century gradually crumbled; traditional ways of seeing the world would no longer do. As May wrote toward the conclusion of his study, "The American culture of 1912 fell into pieces not because it was attacked but because attack, combined with the challenge of events, brought to light its old inadequacies." Among the virtues of May's study is his ability to set out the complexity and scope of those

THOMAS NIEMAN is assistant editor of THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR and works for an educational publishing company.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

changes—in philosophy, the arts, religion, and politics—that constituted the onslaught of modernity.

Cross-stitched into May's history is a rhetoric of revolution. It is, in fact, his opening salvo. His introduction begins: "Everybody knows that at some point in the twentieth century America went through a cultural revolution." Thus, too, does the introduction end, clanging the gong of "the revolution that got under way by 1917." Revolution, it is safe to say, serves as an implicit metaphor on which May's study is built: words such as *custodians, fortresses, insurgents, liberators, rebellion,* and *radicals* are prominently featured in various chapter headings. Such rhetoric takes on a slightly different glint thirty years later with the publication of *Coming to Terms,* where May limns his own highly equivocal career in radical politics.

In his memoir, May writes about the lives of his mother and father, as well as about his own life up until 1950, around which time he began his long teaching career at Berkeley. His boyhood in the 1920s and early 1930s, his days as a student at Berkeley and at Harvard, his marriage and first assignments as a college instructor, his unremarkable war record—all of these receive full coverage and then, in the book's final pages, May appears to hit upon his true subject: the character that resulted from this experience and his intellectual convictions.

May obviously intended through his memoir to explore his family genealogy—in fact, he appears to have done so on and off for years—and he obviously wanted to recall the formative influences and people in his life. The problem is that May does not delve much beneath the surface of the people and events; he merely records, or narrates, in his role as a dispassionate historian trained in the manner of his Harvard teacher Arthur Schlesinger, Sr. As a result, the memoir's subtitle, "A Study in Memory and History," seems wholly inappropriate: one learns nothing about memory and picks up only slivers of American history.

The history May offers possesses at best only local interest. May's father, Harry May, descended from New England Calvinists; he went to Harvard in the early 1880s, then immediately embarked on a lucrative career as a lawyer. For a period of twenty-seven years he argued cases for mining interests in

VIRGINIA WESLEYAN COLLEGE
An Exciting Academic Village Concept
Coeducational
Fully Accredited
Four-year Liberal Arts Curriculum
Emphasis on Individual Student
Beautifully wooded, 300-acre campus
For further information, write:
Admission Office
Virginia Wesleyan College
Norfolk/Virginia Beach, VA 23502-5599
(804) 455-3208

JERSEY CITY STATE COLLEGE
Jersey City, New Jersey
A four year co-educational, fully accredited, multi-purpose institution offering 19 Bachelor of Arts, 1 Bachelor of Fine Arts, 9 Bachelor of Science, 9 Master of Arts, 2 Master of Science programs, and 7 graduate certification programs.
Urban setting and orientation .... five miles from New York City.
New Jersey's Premier
Cooperative Education College
Write: Director of Admissions
2039 Kennedy Boulevard
Jersey City, New Jersey 07305

THE
TROY STATE
UNIVERSITY
SYSTEM
TROY, ALABAMA
FOUNDED 1887
IS CONTINUING ITS EMPHASIS ON FACULTY DEVELOPMENT AND ESPECIALLY WELCOMES INQUIRIES FROM MEMBERS OF PHI BETA KAPPA
RALPH W. ADAMS
Chancellor

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and around Denver, finally winding up on the West Coast as special assistant to U.S. Attorney General Thomas Gregory, in which capacity he conducted litigation against big oil interests that were grabbing up Western land and oil leases. May's account of his father's life often takes on the appearance of a tribute; it reads all too often as a fond remembrance of a father with whom he was never very close but who merits filial admiration by virtue of his role in some minor events in American history.

May's father married a woman twenty-five years younger than himself. He was fifty-five and very much at the end of his career when Henry was born. After being ousted from his government position as special assistant, May's father watched his legal practice dwindle during the Depression to almost nothing, and the family's social status gradually slipped from relatively well-off to middle-class. The gradual erosion of financial security made his family life a bit precarious. May remembered his father as a remote, old man who one year packed up his entire family and carted them off to see Europe. A shy, skinny boy from a serious, cultured family, a boy raised for the most part by his mother, May developed studious habits and bookish interests that led him naturally into a university teaching career. At times in *Coming to Terms*, May lays on the "bookish kid" varnish pretty thick, as in this account of his high school days: "We talked about metaphysical problems, as adolescents often do: Can you imagine infinity? When did time start? Is there a God?"

At Harvard May studied under such men as Arthur Schlesinger, Frederick Merk, Perry Miller, Samuel Eliot Morison, and F. O. Matthiessen. Among May's Harvard contemporaries and friends were Henry Nash Smith, Paul Sweezy, Carl Schorske, and Leo Marx. Yet, even though May believed his second two years at Harvard to be "probably the most exciting and important in my life," one is at a loss to explain in detail what these famous teachers and friends meant to him. From Schlesinger, May acquired a conception of social and intellectual history evident in *The End of American Innocence*. From two of his Harvard friends, Paul Sweezy and Jack Radcliffe, May honed what he calls his "radical opinions" and established his position as a Communist fellow traveler. Yet May does not explain the thinking or arguments that lay behind his Marxism or what precisely his "radical opinions" were, in the manner of, say, Sidney Hook's admirable intellectual autobiography *Out of Step*. May writes instead like a man who is trying to explain political notions he now no longer holds and has difficulty reconciling within himself. "I was never to be," he writes at one point, "a serious Marxist, though for years I tried hard to become one."

Coming to Terms reads best when it attempts an intellectual history of May's life and convictions and of the influence of the teachers and friends encountered during his long academic career; but, unfortunately, he provides very little on such matters. Arthur Schlesinger, Sr., one learns, told a single story in his courses and books—"the gradual broadening of democracy and its slow but sure solution of problems." One learns that Perry Miller's version of America's past was "the polar opposite" of Schlesinger's, yet May never bothers to explain in what ways, precisely, their views differed. Nor, for that matter, does he explain how Henry Nash Smith made "a lot of difference in my thinking and career." May speculates that F. O. Matthiessen's strong Episcopalian beliefs clashed so much with his closet homosexuality that it led ultimately to his tragic suicide, but he does not elaborate on this. With few exceptions, the general level of the observations in the memoir is disappointingly low, and penetration beneath the surface of events is practically non-existent.

Coming to Terms brings May's life up to the 1950s, at which time he began his teaching at Berkeley. Many readers will remember him for his essays about the student uprisings in the early 1960s. His radical leanings led him to view the Free Speech Movement at Berkeley quite sympathetically. Two essays published in THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR—"The Student Movement" (Summer 1965) and "Living with Crisis" (Autumn 1969)—make plain May's ambivalent feelings about the students' actions, as does "The Free Speech Movement in Berkeley," which was published along with other of May's essays in *Ideas, Faiths, and Feelings* (Oxford, 1983). These essays report on the events on the Berkeley campus from the perspective of a sympathetic, uncommitted insider. In this

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

sample passage from the conclusion to "The Student Movement," May looks on the bright side of student radicalism:

> Somewhat wryly, we are forced to realize that radicalism never comes in the size or shape one has asked for. It is the breath of life, and it is full of danger. Our campus now is lively and dangerous. Divided between hope and anxiety, I can look for comfort only to the very considerable reserves, in Berkeley and elsewhere, of intelligence and honesty.

In *Coming to Terms* May avoids the difficult subject of Berkeley radicalism in the sixties except to say, "Deeply involved in campus controversy, I found myself in the most uncomfortable position—the middle." Fence-sitting is indeed uncomfortable, especially in the last decades of one's life, a time when one ordinarily begins to take a reckoning of what one's life, finally, has amounted to and where one stands.

The more one considers May's life and ideas, the more one concludes that his upbringing without the strong presence of a father greatly influenced his later life. The uncertain, even precarious status of his family carries over to May's political notions and opinions in general, which have the same vague uncertainty, or even a touch of insecurity, about them. In adolescence, he writes, "one's chief business is building a self." In college, he writes, "I worried about two major questions of equal importance—why I was not a Communist and why I was a virgin." Later May variously describes himself as "eclectic and romantic" and, toward the end of his memoir, as someone of "incessant ambivalence and rock-bottom intuitionism." Outside university life, such a person would simply be called wishy-washy.

Judging from his memoir, one concludes that May is now committed to nothing. He confesses to being a "born fellow traveler," both with Marxism and Christianity. "For me," he writes in the last few pages, "allegiance to causes have usually been a matter of allegiances to people. I am not happy to admit this." But how is one to reconcile May's lack of convictions with his writing of a small classic, *The End of American Innocence*? And how will such admissions affect the re-

'The choice to be a scholar is an investment in success.'

An exciting opportunity for bright and talented students can be found at

"The Tradition Of Success."

Call 1-800-CATAWBA

Catawba College

Salisbury, North Carolina 28144-2488

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

evaluation of his history? May's memoir will most likely serve to deflate his reputation. The revolutionary rhetoric in which his classic study is clothed looks more flimsy than ever, the work standing—as for the most part it always has—on the breadth and level of detail of its research more than on the power of its observations.

In the concluding pages of *Coming to Terms*, May offers a puzzling confession: "I find it necessary," he writes, "to admit that I have to live by certain values whose basis I cannot really explain." The admission—so unabashedly honest—amounts to saying that his life was confused and more than a little arbitrary, that the ideas he espoused and the causes for which he argued seemed a good idea at the time but, ultimately, not worth getting worked up over. It is not a happy truth for a teacher and historian who devoted himself to a life of ideas to face, and it is probably not, one imagines, what May set out to proclaim when, in the gentle quiet of his retiring years, he embarked on these memoirs.

A Vot' Santé!

PUBLIC DRINKING AND POPULAR CULTURE IN EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY PARIS. *By Thomas Brennan. Princeton University Press. $38.*

Reviewed by EUGEN WEBER

Five or six hundred thousand people, drinking, socializing, brawling in some four thousand inns, taverns, cabarets, cafés, guinguettes, pothouses, and dramshops: one for every one hundred and fifty men, women, and children. That is the eighteenth-century Paris that Thomas Brennan has laid out for us in a book that is less about fluid intake than it is about the rituals and activities that surrounded it. Brennan, who teaches history at the U.S. Naval Academy, has found a way to breach the opacity of popular culture—one kind of popular culture—by plumbing the rich records of the trouble that some drinkers made or suffered. The voices of the humble, the values of the unlearned, the doings of those whom history has failed to notice (until just the other day), survive in judicial archives and in the minutes of police commissioners. The voices are distorted, to be sure, transcribed by literate secretaries, condensed, recast, and sometimes fabricated by witness or plaintiff or accused, yet carrying the flavors of authenticity often enough to allow us access to unexceptional folk whom their literate contemporaries despised, traduced, or, most often, ignored. Brennan has waded through these archives; he has compiled statistics, and his tables estimate crimes, disorders, age, sex, social standing, and associations of his quarries; but he also gives us their voices, their words, sometimes their feelings. His is a sensible, sensitive, well-written book; and, if he sometimes lapses into jargon, that never becomes overwhelming, it never really jars.

Brennan might well agree with Dr. Johnson that there was (at least in the eighteenth century) nothing yet contrived by man by which so much happiness is produced as by a good tavern or inn. The focus of Brennan's inquiry are those neighborhood taverns found in every street, which he sees standing at the juncture between public and private life and offering a key to bits of both.

Taverns are age-old institutions. Cafés, introduced in the seventeenth century, were far more grand. They sported mirrors, chandeliers, marble-topped tables, displayed silver, dished up their brew (not just coffee, but chocolate or liqueurs) in porcelain cups, cut glass, or even crystal, provided (as contemporary engravings witness) upholstered chairs, even the unusual comfort of a stove. But a cup of coffee cost four sous; one of chocolate, five; a glass of brandy, seven. Add a tip and you are speaking of something between one-sixth and one-quarter of a workman's daily wage. For the price of a cup of coffee, a pint of wine went a much longer way. Ordinary folk belonged in the tavern's more affordable surroundings, mixing with their own: bare rooms furnished with a few chairs, benches, tables, pots of tin, pewter, crockery, and glasses—and sometimes the beds or bedding of owners and the help pushed against the walls. The clientele drank just wine: sometimes white, but mostly red or "black"—the wines of Orléans, Burgundy, Champagne, or of the Paris basin. These were new wines, for in the eighteenth century wine did not keep well after two years or three, and after four it turned to vinegar. Spirits were too expensive. Few wines were

✪ EUGEN WEBER's latest book, *France, Fin de siècle*, has just been reissued in paperback.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

from Bordeaux or from the south: too far away, hence transport made them dearer than the others. Few wines also were from vineyards really close to Paris, whose booze (like the sharp wine of Suresnes) inspired allegations that they needed three to quaff: one who imbibed, two to hold and see he gets it down. Most of the brews came from regions with easy water access to the capital, which was why Paris consumed all the wine of the Orléanais and nearly all from Beaujolais and Macon.

Brennan mentions the problems of adulteration and tampering with wine, which were about to get much worse. He does not dwell on the pollution of water: ill-accessible, infected by seepage from cesspits, graveyards, and household and workshop waste, resulting in the water looking murky and tasting mucky. Water was scarce. Its principal source, the Seine, was a city sewer from which all could drink. Public fountains, about eighty-five of them, and thirty thousand wells, provided additional laxative offerings. Those who could, drank mineral waters: nearly five million liters a year by the Revolution. But the average Parisian's water ration, not much more than half a liter a day, was probably equivalent to his wine ration—or less. And sometimes it cost more. Nevertheless, shortage, pollution, and adulteration became worse with further urban overcrowding in the nineteenth century; and cutting dubious water even with doubtful quality wine would seem a reasonable procedure. Brennan tells us that his sources suggest that drinkers did not cut their wine in public places. I cannot help wondering what they did at home: drink their lousy water as it came from well or fountain, or (if they could afford it) try to lace it with some alcoholic counteragent?

In public, at any rate (and Brennan's book is about public drinking), normal Parisians did not drink an awful lot. For drinking was more about fellowship than about getting drunk: the jug on the table part of the rituals of business, of a moment's relaxation, of "symbolic exchange." For all such activities, taverns were the venue. In a city where, well into the nineteenth century, everyday life seldom stretched beyond the narrow limits of *quartier*, parish, and ward, neighborhood pot-

The College of
WOOSTER

An independent collegial community, concerned for standards, a place dedicated to the mind and to the spirit.

Upperclass Independent Study program since 1948

B.A., B.M., and B. Mus.Ed. degrees

Extensive internship and off-campus work/study programs

Kappa of Ohio Chapter of Phi Beta Kappa

Information: Admissions Office Rm.A., The College of Wooster, Wooster, OH 44691

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

houses provided centers of sociability and solidarity, of vicinal and professional identity. In an age of straitened, mean, uncomfortable, cheerless housing, a lot of activities we now connect with the office, shop, or home went on in streets and other public places—not least, Brennan makes clear, in public drinking places.

Drinking places were becoming more diverse. The better kind of person moved to finer quarters offering superior fare. Literary society, especially, abandoned cabarets for cafés. Alcohol was becoming as much a dietary as a social solecism. In 1768, Duhamel du Monceau's essay on the health of literary folk explained that their digestion being difficult and slow, men of letters should eat lightly, stick to water, keep away from wine. When coffee replaced wine as a source of inspiration, the reputation of once-beloved taverns plummeted. Removed from activities that they had shared not so long before, "elites," or at any rate men of letters who etch the picture of a time, now depicted cabarets as marginal, violent, debauched, or, at least, suspect. This is the image the author sets out to nuance and, better still, negate by insisting on the peaceful everyday use of taverns that provided recreation and refuge for thousands.

Who were these thousands? In the main, they were shopkeepers, artisans, journeymen, and soldiers. A few of the better sort—merchants and bourgeois—frequented them, or dropped in now and then. Very few nobles frequented taverns, still fewer clerics. Families sometimes appear—men with their wives and children. But women are rare, out of their element, reluctant to go beyond the threshold without the sponsorship and protection of a man. Even with it, they might be a bad lot, or assumed to be, which meant they were liable to suffer violence or to be treated with disrespect. So tavern society is predominantly male: a shifting yet homogenous body of neighbors and professional mates.

It may be the nature of Brennan's source material, but this peaceful business environment, this home of everyday commonplaces, often erupts into violence. Just like home. These people fly off the handle easily. Everything we know about the time confirms the violent nature of the society he paints, but Brennan fleshes out the sources of conflict: competition, distrust, neighborly and professional rivalries, festering enmities, old spites and new resentments, mistrust, jealousy, acrimony even between friends, welling up from just below the surface, erupting from jest to insults, challenges, blows, brawls. The town watch intervenes, generally late; locals and innkeeper hardly ever step in. Why start new feuds?

The interesting thing is that most of these confrontations are about reputation, honor, personal dignity: solvency, skill, trustworthiness. And, of course, sex. Men seek to discredit a rival, a competitor, a neighbor, and the object of their bile strikes back: sometimes by counter-insults and abuse, sometimes by bringing charges, sometimes quite literally with fists, cudgel, or sword. And, since going to court costs money, masters sue, journeymen mix it up. The poorer and lower in the social scale the protagonists, the more likely they are to pass from words to blows. So, what the police and their masters perceive as a center of disorder, Brennan depicts as public theater on whose stage members of the laboring classes insist on their self-respect and on the respect of others, and fight to defend them.

This appears more clearly when Brennan contrasts the home-ground tavern with the farther-off guinguette. Once you leave the neighborhood, violence may not abate, but its incidence alters. The tavern, two or three hundred yards at most from shop or dwelling, was an extension of home. Situated two or three miles from the city center, the guinguette offered escape from neighborhood, from its promiscuous intimacies and dense social relations, and also from the heat and smells of the city. With its gardens and greens, its music and dancing and games of bowls, the guinguette represented Sunday and holiday fun, a day's outing, leisure and revelry separate from work, domesticity, and decorum. The guinguette stood outside the tax barriers that made wine (like other goods) dearer in the city. Its wine was cheaper and often of better quality, its rooms were larger, its atmosphere more lively, and women were more prominent in the guinguette, whatever their provenance.

From the point of view of the authorities, however, tavern and guinguette were both dens of disorder, debauchery, dissolution. For the Church (or at least for the faculty of theology) drunkenness was a mortal sin. The police sought to regulate it with rules that the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Encyclopedia described as "very fine but of little use." The state passed ordinances against drinking and ordered drunkards to be whipped, but only after the second offense. The effect was like blowing bugles at a can of cat food. Ordinances and prohibitions were fitfully enforced, at best, like all their kind under the Old Regime, which tempered rigor with inefficiency. In any case, Brennan feels that—apart from the occasional Sunday binge in a guinguette—most people could have drunk only little.

Figures seem to bear him out. The average annual consumption of wine, about one hundred and twenty liters per person, appears to have declined with the century. Brennan reckons that adults probably consumed something like three-quarters of a liter a day, which sounds a good deal less than what their descendants were to ingurgitate. Even so, with a workman's wages around thirty sous a day, when he worked, between 25 to 30 percent of his pay would be spent on wine. Add to this the incidence of tavern gambling, whether benign like playing for a round of drinks, or less so where losses could be dire, and one can understand not only the state's hostility to gambling, which it outlawed, but the complaints of parents, children, and spouses against an indulgence that, even more than drink but closely associated with it, struck at the base of a fragile household economy.

What the tavern's male society appreciated as an honorable willingness to spend, consume, and socialize, many a wife cursed as catastrophic. Brennan, who quotes Foucault with approval, does not like the "growing repression of social deviance," let alone the restraints being placed on friendly conventions. But the evidence he conscientiously provides catalogs the Hogarthian fallout of tavern-trotting: work neglected, precious money wasted, savings depleted, wives beaten and, worse, their dowries dissipated. Work, as Wilde knew, is the curse of the drinking classes. And he who has drunk, says the French proverb, will drink again. It is all very well for Brennan to inveigh against "elite" attempts to control popular leisure and against condescending condemnations of drink, gambling, and rowdiness as threats to productivity. But it was not only elites who saw things in this way. Women also wanted their men to earn more and waste less. Besides, in an age when sensibility made it harder to squeeze the populace as ruthlessly as in the good old days (or to ignore them as

Bryn Mawr

Summer Sessions 1989

Bryn Mawr College offers intensive summer sessions in mathematics, sciences, and languages. The College welcomes qualified women and men from other colleges, high school graduates who have not begun their college careers, gifted students still in secondary school, and men and women who may wish to return to school or take a special interest course, as well as students who regularly attend Bryn Mawr College.

The program is divided into two sequential sessions. Each session is equivalent to one full semester and carries four semester hours credit. Two sessions are the equivalent of one full year. Because of the intensive pace, one course per session is considered a full-time load.

Sciences and Mathematics
June 5–July 7
July 11–August 11

Languages
June 5–June 30
July 3–July 28

Information and applications are available from
Division of Special Studies
Bryn Mawr College
Bryn Mawr, PA 19010-2899
215 526-7350

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

consistently), productivity was becoming the only acceptable way of turning out a surplus. For the elite, which I take to mean those who had some say in how things were run, it was still possible to leave the poor to die. But the spectacle of their suffering was becoming more uncomfortable. That is one reason why society set about cleaning up its world; and one way to improve it was to improve those who cluttered it up. Attack on drink was a strategy of progress.

In the end, the mildly repressive authorities who had ineffectively tried to regulate the drink and leisure of the lower orders were brushed away with the Old Regime and were replaced by a far more effectively repressive New Regime. When the Revolution disrupted the farming economy and the provisioning of Paris, bringing back the dearths and famines that the latter eighteenth century had forgotten, the urban poor tried to supplement their insufficient rations by recurring to the most accessible calories they could find: wines and spirits. Poor people who eat badly drink more. That makes good sense: a calorie of wine is a good deal cheaper than a calorie of meat. Deteriorating diet may explain the rising alcoholic intake of the nineteenth-century urban milieu, the representativeness of Emile Zola's *Assommoir*, and the nineteenth century's discovery of alcoholism, unknown (at least as a word) to those whom Brennan has chronicled with so much sympathy. But that would be another story.

As is its wont, the Princeton University Press has turned out a splendid little volume, handsomely bound, beautifully printed, and containing half a dozen illuminating reproductions from contemporary prints of taverns and guinguettes. But $38 for 333 pages is really too much and could make even university libraries, a generally captive market, hesitate to purchase. At any rate, given such a price, the press might forbear to print *principle* when the text means *principal*.

MONTANA TECH

recognized quality education for minerals and energy-related careers.

Engineering Fields

- Engineering Science
  - Energies Engineering
  - Plant Design
  - Systems/Control
  - Welding Engineering
- Environmental Engineering
- Geological Engineering
- Geophysical Engineering
- Metallurgical/Mineral Processing Engineering
  - Extractive
  - Mineral Processing
  - Materials
- Mining Engineering
- Petroleum Engineering

Related Fields

- Chemistry
- Computer Science
- Business Information Systems
  - Applied Computer Science
  - Information Science
- Mathematics
- Occupational Safety & Health
  - Applied Health Science
- Society & Technology
  - Human Values
  - Communications
  - Public Policy
  - Organizational Management

Admissions Office
Montana Tech
Butte, MT 59701
1-800-445-TECH

LOYOLA UNIVERSITY · CHICAGO · 1870

Three campuses in metropolitan Chicago offer prospective students a choice of

42 bachelor's degrees,
30 master's degrees,
the Ph.D. in 17 areas,
and degrees from
7 professional schools.

Loyola University of Chicago —our name affirms a great university's commitment to a great city.

Loyola University of Chicago
820 North Michigan Avenue
Chicago, Illinois 60611

An equal opportunity educator and employer.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Reader Replies . . . . . .

Feminist Literary Criticism

One wonders, after reading Peter Shaw's "Feminist Literary Criticism" (Autumn 1988), why he feels compelled to gratuitously comment at the start of his essay that it "leaves aside the larger task of evaluating the accomplishments of feminist literary criticism" when it is clear that he does not think feminist literary criticism *has* accomplished anything, at least anything of positive value. However, perhaps feminist literary critics ought to be grateful that Shaw did not attempt to evaluate these "accomplishments," given that his attempt to articulate how feminist criticism has failed demonstrates an apparent lack of knowledge of the field. An essay in which Shaw tried to delineate the positive aspects of feminist criticism is one thing academia could do without; let's hope he doesn't have this in mind as a future project.

The problem with Shaw's essay is not so much his suggestion that feminist literary criticism has served feminism badly and, in the process, undermined "purely" literary values (as if politics and aesthetics are and always have been mutually exclusive categories) but that his scholarship is so poor. To attack him solely on the basis of his argument would be to imply that feminist critics and theorists simply will not have their work criticized, something which Shaw seems to believe, but about which he is sadly mistaken. Feminist critics and theorists are not adverse to *constructive* criticism, whether it be from scholars within their ranks or from critics outside the movement. But Shaw's criticism fails to be constructive because his scholarly methods are shoddy. He seems to think "feminist critics" (although he gives us absolutely no idea as to whom *in particular* he is referring) produce work "they" would term "masculinist," because, as he notes, their scholarship "on the whole is extensively researched, logically organized, and scrupulously footnoted." However, leading American feminist critics such as Nina Baym, Elaine Showalter and Annette Kolodny would certainly not call good scholarship "masculinist." "Extensively researched, logically organized, and scrupulously footnoted" work is the least they would expect of a literary scholar and they would be appalled if they read Shaw's essay.

Shaw does not intend this essay to be merely descriptive, rather he means it to be hard-hitting and polemical, and as such, he ought to be able to support *all* his claims with specific examples; he ought to be able to supply the names of specific feminist critics and theorists who say the things he claims "they," "others" and "some" say. Yet at many points in his essay he is either unwilling or unable to do so. His tendency to generalize, to refer to "feminist critics" without specifying, gets him into trouble in several places, most noticeably in his account of "Stage Three criticism." Aside from the fact that he contradicts himself by claiming, without citing anyone to support this claim, that the shortcomings of early feminist criticism are "laid to rest" and "now being said to have been overcome by Stage Three criticism," when he stated earlier that most practitioners of feminist criticism agree that no unified theory of it has emerged, he assumes that doing "Stage Three criticism" means doing "critical theory," which to him, means doing poststructuralist theory. First of all, it is entirely unclear why Shaw thinks that the term "critical theory" has "of course come to refer to the range of French-derived, poststructuralist theories." Secondly, and most importantly, it is unclear why he thinks doing "Stage Three criticism" necessarily means doing poststructuralist theory. Of course there are many feminist critics who do do poststructuralist theory, for example, Hélène Cixous, Julia Kristeva, Jane Gallop and Gayatri Spivak, but by no means are *all* feminist critics poststructuralists. However, Shaw does not seem aware of the fact that there are many different theoretical movements within feminist criticism and this apparent lack of awareness is reflected in his general statement that "feminist critics, among others, appear to have borrowed the recherché vocabulary of post-structuralism." If he were at all informed about feminist criticism, he would know and would have mentioned at this particular juncture in his essay, that one of the biggest issues in feminist criticism and theory today is the debate

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

between Anglo-American feminist "materialists," who emphasize the importance of examining women's texts and the historical contexts in which they were written to demonstrate how gender is culturally constructed and French feminist "essentialists," who, appropriating poststructuralist theories, focus on the ways that gender is constructed through language.

The theoretical distinction between "materialism" and "essentialism" is only one example of the kind of distinction Shaw ought to be able to make in an essay that is supposed to be a "survey from the academy." But since he seems to be ignorant of the differences between French and Anglo-American feminist criticism, it is not surprising that he makes no note of the different theoretical strands within *American* feminist criticism. If Shaw's essay were "extensively researched, logically organized, and scrupulously footnoted" (has Shaw ever participated in the common practice of footnoting?), it would have discussed the differences between, for example, Elaine Showalter's "gynocritics," Annette Kolodny's "pluralism," Nina Baym's "pragmatism" and Alice Jardine's "gynesis."

Because Shaw seems unaware of the different theoretical methods that feminist critics employ, he often misconstrues those critics and theorists he actually *does* cite to support his argument. A case in point is his account of Annette Kolodny, which not only misconstrues, but also maligns, her. Employing his favorite technique of not providing the names of specific critics in conjunction with his claims, in this case in order to accuse feminist critics of "coercion," Shaw states that "not even the most orthodox themselves, even those who specialize in anathematizing other feminists, can feel safe." The sentence that follows this one, however, makes a tacit connection between those who "specialize in anathematizing other feminists" and Annette Kolodny, as Shaw writes, "Thus, Toril Moi finds Annette Kolodny herself guilty of unwittingly serving the enemy." As mentioned above, Kolodny calls herself a *pluralist* (Shaw quotes "Dancing Through the Minefield," in which Kolodny sets forth her pluralistic methodology, but has he actually *read* it?); she would not take lightly, I suspect, the implied description of herself as one of "those" (whoever else they might include) "who enforce the most Draconian standards" and to tacitly accuse her of specializing in "anathematizing other feminist critics" is simply outrageous.

What shred of evidence does Shaw have to support such a defamation? It would appear that his evidence is what he calls Kolodny's "technique of interrogation" for hunting "within the ranks for covertly sexist thinking." This "technique of interrogation," which exists nowhere except in Shaw's head, is apparently summed up by a question Kolodny asks in "Dancing Through the Minefield" that he thinks demonstrates how "one can trust neither a critic's female identity, nor her use of an accepted technique of feminist criticism, nor even her professed feminism when assessing her usefulness to the movement: politics is all." Kolodny's question, "What ends do these judgments serve and what conceptions of the world or ideological stances do they (even if unwittingly) help to perpetuate?" is asked, Shaw explains, by the feminist critic "when scrutinizing a critic's work for heterodoxy." One is hard put to see how the context in which Kolodny asks this question, that is, in the context of explaining the way feminist critics seek to "discover how aesthetic value is assigned in the first place, where it resides (in the text or in the reader), and, most important, what validity may really be claimed by our aesthetic 'judgments,' " in any way constitutes a "technique of interrogation" for rooting out "bad" feminist critics. Shaw takes Kolodny's words out of context and twists them in a way suited for his purposes; in so doing, he completely misrepresents her work.

THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR does much to discredit itself by publishing such a shoddy piece of work; Shaw generalizes about "feminist critics," takes their words and arguments out of context, quotes critics without citing names or works (i.e., pp. 512–13). As a result, his essay does nothing more than misrepresent and misconstrue the short history of feminist criticism and theory. As for Shaw, one can only hope for his own sake that his soon-to-be-released book *The War of the Intellect: Episodes in the Decline of Discourse* is better researched, better organized and better footnoted than his essay. If not, he needn't fear persecution by Stalinist feminists so much as being laughed out of the profession.

M. J. DEVANEY
Department of English
University of Virginia
Charlottesville, Virginia

PETER SHAW replies: M. J. Devaney's complaints boil down to two assertions: that my article fails to document its generalizations and that it contains false assertions traceable to a failure to recognize the multiplicity of points of view within feminist criticism. In the first place, it is necessary to distinguish the footnote documentation being called for from the kind of evidence necessary to make a generalization. The books from which I was quoting are listed in a long note near the beginning of the essay and additional writings cited are named in the text. One may surmise that this degree of documentation made it possible for Devaney to locate my citation of Annette Kolodny. In contrast, when I describe feminist scholarship as "on the whole extensively researched. . ." the generalization represents an impression that would not really be

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

either supported or refuted by particular examples.

For example, Devaney's letter might seem to refute me. Here is a feminist, it could be argued, who has failed at research. Devaney complains about the absence of footnotes in my article and asks if I have ever used them. But she has not looked up my two scholarly books for the answer. Nor has she searched out other issues of THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR, which would have made it evident that the magazine does not permit footnoting. Finally, she cites the subtitle of my article as a "survey from the academy" when it actually reads "a report from the academy." Despite this evidence I maintain my right to generalize, without citations, that feminist "scholarship is on the whole extensively researched, logically organized, and scrupulously footnoted."

On the other hand, when Devaney violates her own demand for documented generalizations by flatly asserting that "feminist critics and theorists are not adverse [*sic*] to *constructive* criticism," the reader has reason to be distrustful. Unnecessary documentation is pedantic; but documentation is most certainly called for when an opposing contention—that feminist critics brook no criticism whatsoever—has been put forward, as it has in my article. It follows that I must now offer quotations to defend several of the points on which Devaney challenges me.

But first, an additional observation regarding the nature of generalization needs to be made—this time in connection with Devaney's assertion that "Shaw does not seem aware of the fact that there are many different theoretical movements within feminist criticism." In fact, the existence of conflicting movements is a central concern of my essay, which poses the question of "how the representatives of feminist criticism's central tendency deal with the challenges of its extremists." But the point here is that when I ascribe a given tendency to "feminist critics" it is obvious, since I have spoken all along of several tendencies, that I am not referring to all feminist critics. In such a case it is customary to omit the word "some" out of respect for the reader.

Devaney is certainly right to point out the contradiction in presenting Stage Three feminist criticism as a solution to the movement's theoretical problems given the circumstance that no unified theory has emerged. But the contradiction is feminist criticism's, not mine. (The phrase "no unified theory," quoted from my essay by Devaney, would alone seem to indicate a grasp of the criticism's having multiple points of view.) As for my notion that Stage Three criticism is marked by abstract theory and especially French poststructuralism, I was here echoing, among others, K. K. Ruthven's *Feminist Literary Studies: An Introduction*, which discusses the three stages and states: "Current feminist criticism would be inconceivable without Michel Foucault's work on discursive formations, the semiology of Roland Barthes, the deconstruction of Jacques Derrida, and Jacques Lacan's imbrication of psychoanalysis with linguistics" (p. 11). Similarly, Elaine Showalter, whom Devaney calls a leading American feminist critic, writes in the introduction to her anthology *The New Feminist Criticism* that the "third phase" of feminist criticism has been marked by an "increased prominence of theoretical questions" thanks in part to the influence of "French [and English] feminist critics" (p. 8).

My quotation from Annette Kolodny, in connection with the feminist practice of scrutinizing criticism for its ideological tendencies, establishes the theoretical basis for such scrutiny but was not intended to accuse Kolodny of practicing it. By "Kolodny herself" I did not mean "even a scrutinizer like Kolodny" but rather "even a feminist with a position as secure as that of Kolodny." Devaney is right to call the charge of scrutinizing in order to enforce orthodoxy, if it is false, a "defamation." That is why I am glad to correct any impression I may have given of leveling such a charge against Annette Kolodny. But does Devaney's usage mean that she disapproves of the enforcement of orthodoxy? So far, to my knowledge, no feminist has so disapproved in print.

Hold the Footnotes

Once you (individually or institutionally) stated a rule of your publication that there should never be a footnote. Well, hardly ever. . . . I stumbled over two in the devastating article "Feminist Literary Criticism" and I ask you to step on them before they multiply. Or have asterisks some arcane sexual significance?

J. B. LAWRENCE
San Bernardino, California

The Limits of Expertise

Professor McCloskey's article "The Limits of Expertise" (Summer 1988) was a pleasure to read. He clearly sets out the pleasures of expertise and its irrelevance to the object of attaining great affluence. One error needs correction from a non-expert. John Maynard Keynes is said to have lost money in speculations "regularly before breakfast." According to one biographer, Sir Roy Harrod, it is true that Keynes lost a good deal of his own money and a good deal more of his father's when he was a fledgling operator. He conscientiously set to work to recover what had been lost, did so, and eventually became a very wealthy man. (See Skidelsky's *John Maynard Keynes, Hopes Betrayed, 1883–1920*, pp. 286–88).

His speculative acumen benefited not only the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Keynes family but also Kings College, Cambridge. Any visitor to that college will be impressed with the spacious Keynes addition, paid for by his speculations.

The point that Mr. McCloskey makes is not refuted by Keynes's stock market success. He was an expert economist and a brilliant man, quite capable of establishing expertise in other fields. He decided that he had to become an expert on the market, and successfully acquired that quite different expertise.

JOHN P. CONRAD
Davis, California

Philip Larkin

In the interests of, I suppose, scholarship, may I correct a totally false impression of Philip Larkin's circumstances given in a poem by Lolette Kuby in your issue of Summer 1988. Its theme is that Larkin, as one who "lives alone" and is an "only child," would have been in a particularly sad and solitary condition when he went to the hospital. In fact, he was not living alone, but with his long-time companion Monica Jones; and he was not an only child, being survived by a sister (married and with offspring). Thus the whole theme falls to pieces.

George Watson's interesting and sometimes perceptive prose tribute is also a little misleading on some points. Basing himself on the humorous "Annus Mirabilis" (which he slightly misquotes), he represents Larkin as unable to "woo or win" a woman. Other poems—"Talking in Bed," "Wild Oats," the latter including an exchange of rings and "numerous" more or less illicit meetings—give a truer impression. This is indeed compatible with a degree of "sexual frustration," but not with the total block Watson seems to imply.

Secondly, Watson misapprehends Larkin's political position. It is not at all that he "ended his days" a convert to "Thatcherism." He had *always* held notable "reactionary" views. At the same time he never applauded the mindless pursuit of profit: but his hard-hitting attack on precisely Watson's targets in "Going, Going" was published in 1972, so earlier governments take any blame. On the contrary, as he wrote me once, he admired Mrs. Thatcher for saying "if you can't afford it you can't have it," and for attempting to restore the pre-inflationary world. Mr. Watson is entitled to call what he dislikes "Thatcherism," but not to suggest that this has anything to do with Larkin's Thatcherism.

ROBERT CONQUEST
Stanford University
Stanford, California

Short Subject

Aristides' "Short Subject" (Autumn 1988) adds to his stature as the most enjoyable essayist in the land. It also confirms, for at least one tall short man, that the prose of short men is always down to earth; of course the prose of tall men is always stilted, with the honorable exception of the prose of Thomas Jefferson. But Jefferson's felicitous prose is a direct result of his having as his intellectual mentor William Small.

BERNARD ADELMAN
Winthrop, Massachusetts

Statement of Ownership, Management and Circulation (Act of August 12, 1970; Section 3685, Title 39, United States Code)

1. Title, THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR; 2. Date of Filing, November 4, 1988; 3. Frequency, Quarterly—March, June, September, December; 4. Office of Publication, 1811 Q Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20009.

6. Names and Addresses of Publisher, Editor: Publisher, Phi Beta Kappa Society, 1811 Q Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20009; Editor, Joseph Epstein, 522 Church Street, Evanston, Illinois 60201.

7. Owner: Phi Beta Kappa Society, 1811 Q Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20009; No Stockholders.

8. Known Bondholders, Mortgages, and Other Security Holders Owning or Holding 1 Percent or More of Total Amount of Bonds, Mortgages or Other Securities: None.

9. The purpose, function, and nonprofit status of this organization and the exempt status for Federal Income tax purposes have not changed during preceding 12 months.

10. Extent and Nature of Circulation	Average No. Copies Each Issue During Preceding 12 Months	Actual No. of Copies Single Issue Published Nearest to Filing Date
A. Total No. Copies Printed (Net Press Run)	29,433	29,010
B. Paid Circulation		
1. Sales through Dealers and Carriers, Street Vendors and Counter Sales	1,864	2,650
2. Mail Subscriptions	23,256	22,669 to date
C. Total Paid Circulation	25,120	25,575 to date
D. Free Distribution by Mail, Carrier or Other Means Samples, Complimentary, and Other Free Copies	1,298	1,307
E. Total Distribution (Sum of C and D)	26,418	26,882
F. Copies Not Distributed		
1. Office Use, Left-Over, Unaccounted, Spoiled After Printing	2,229	2,128
2. Returns From News Agent	786 to date	0 to date
G. Total (Sum of E&F—should equal net press run shown in A)	29,433	29,010

I certify that the statements made by me above are correct and complete.
Kenneth M. Greene

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THE MODERNS OR THE MONKEYS:

Paperback Choices from Johns Hopkins

THREE BY HUGH KENNER—

Just last year critics hailed the completion of Hugh Kenner's trilogy on "the three provinces of literary modernism." Now all three volumes are available in paperback. With his trademark blend of anecdote, analysis, and celebration, Kenner presents a time and a literary tradition in a whole new way—and does so with the kind of grace and energy that led Carlos Baker to say, "I'd rather read Kenner than any critic now operating."
$12.95 each

A Colder Eye
The Modern Irish Writers

A Homemade World
The American Modernist Writers

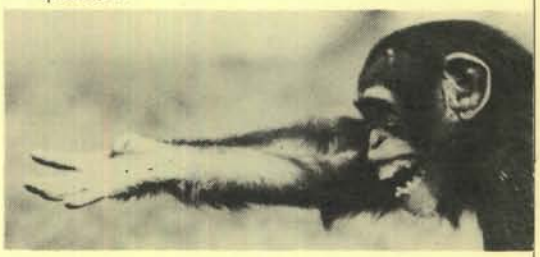
A Sinking Island
The Modern English Writers

The Urban Experience
David Harvey
$14.95

In the American Province
Studies in the History and Historiography of Ideas
David A. Hollinger
$12.50

Inventing American Broadcasting, 1899-1922
Susan J. Douglas
$14.95

Chimpanzee Politics
Power and Sex among Apes
Frans de Waal
foreword by Desmond Morris
$12.95



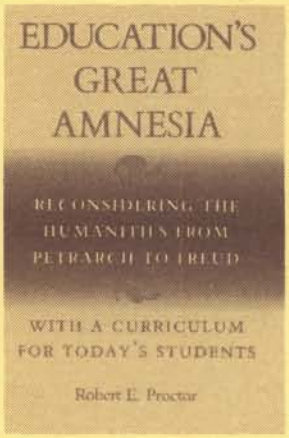
Amazons
A Study in Athenian Mythmaking
Wm. Blake Tyrrell
$11.95

THE JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY PRESS
701 West 40th Street, Suite 275, Baltimore, Maryland 21211
or call 1-800-537-JHUP

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

NEW from INDIANA

Education's Great Amnesia



Reconsidering the Humanities from Petrarch to Freud, with a Curriculum for Today's Students

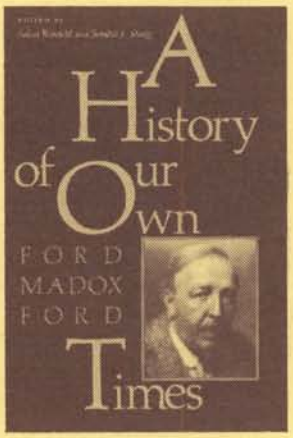
By Robert E. Proctor

"For the first time, in my estimation, has a scholar succeeded in showing the relation of these humanistic studies to the personal and social life of the ancient world and of the Renaissance." —Charles Trinkaus

". . . a splendid statement bringing together in a careful and coherent way the prospects for a solid humanities curriculum." —Ernest L. Boyer

$25.00

A History of Our Own Times



By Ford Madox Ford
Edited by Solon Beinfeld and Sondra J. Stang
Foreword by Gordon A. Craig

". . . an edifying, provocative, and—most importantly—enjoyable book." —*Booklist*

This never-before published study of historical change in Europe and America between 1870 and 1895 is the only volume Ford completed of a planned three-volume work seen as the magnum opus that would follow *Parade's End.*

$27.50

At bookstores, or direct from

INDIANA UNIVERSITY PRESS

Tenth and Morton Streets, Bloomington, Indiana 47405 • 812-855-6804

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED